MUTUAL AID IN THE WELFARE STATE

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ABSTRACT

Mutual Aid in the Welfare State is divided into four parts.

The first part outlines the idea of organizational form as the way that the people in an organization are organized, and distinguishes three types of voluntary organization: the third of these is identified as voluntary organizational form. After a discussion of the role of values in Social Science, the organizational tradition of Anarchism is explained, as being the most suitable way of looking at mutual aid groups and voluntary organizational form. As well as an exposition of the classic anarchist theorists, the development of anarchist organizational forms in Spain before the Civil War is used as a practical illustration of how anarchist organization theory has developed and works.

The second part of the thesis turns to sociology. It was observed in the first part that although anarchist theory was comprehensive enough in its dealings with federalism, the mutualist elements of the theory were under-developed. This gap in mutualist theory is filled by a consideration of community and organizational sociology, which are both criticized for the rationalist bias that intrudes in the way they have developed. The main sources used are Tonnies and Weber. A theory of mutual aid is then developed from a consideration of what mutual aid groups are not. This is then linked in with the theories of Habermas and writings from modern feminism. The second part concludes with a criticism of the oligarchical theories of Michels, which have up till now been the main sociological paradigm for voluntary organizing.

The third part of the thesis introduces cases from the literature on voluntary groups in an expansion of the ideas of mutual aid which were developed theoretically. In the course of this, distinctions between different types of mutual aid group are drawn, together with an analysis of different problems faced by each type. Distinctions between mutual aid groups and some commonly overlapping categories of organization are drawn also. The third part concludes with an examination of the relationships between the state and mutual aid groups.

The fourth and last section of the thesis is devoted to a more detailed examination of the Scottish Pre-School Playgroups Association. SPPA has the classic organizational form laid out in anarchist organization theory, illustrates many of the points made about mutual aid groups in other parts of the thesis, and manages to co-exist with the state. The argument of the thesis is that one example is all that is needed to show that mutualist and anarchist organization is a viable alternative to hierarchical organization which people are typically more used to. SPPA is that example, and consequently serves as an empirical illustration of the rest of the thesis.

In accordance with Regulation 2.4.15 of the University Regulations, I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed entirely by myself.

Andrew Margolis

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PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER ONE

TYPES OF DEFINITIONS

One problem encountered throughout social science is that many of the words and concepts used have commonsense rather than precise 'scientific' definitions. When physicists talk about gravity, when chemists talk about compounds, and when biologists talk about sexual reproduction there is an invariable assumption, usually justified, that the reader has the same idea of what the words refer to as the writer has in using them. Social scientists who attempt the same stratagem usually end up using so much jargon in an attempt to avoid ambiguities that they become virtually incomprehensible to anyone else: and while nobody really expects ordinary people to benefit from reading advanced texts in nuclear physics, social science is commonly regarded by all concerned as being somewhat more accessible. Indeed, many of its practitioners might hope that non-academics would fruitfully consume what they produce. Unfortunately, the ways in which social scientists use language is often not at all ordinary, and the observation with which we began - that the words a social scientist uses have both specialized and ordinary uses - means that any assumption to this effect, that the reader does in fact have the same understanding of words as the writer possesses, is liable to be wrong. To be precise in what one says and at the same time avoid using jargon is a project fraught with difficulty.

A major area full of these difficulties is the study of organizations. Everybody knows the word 'organization', applies it and uses it to their own and everybody else's satisfaction.

Not even a social scientist would ordinarily quarrel with this normal use of the word. But to use a word doesn't necessarily imply that anyone has to be able to define what it means - Wittgenstein pointed out that knowing the use of a word is knowing its meaning. Furthermore, a word might not be possible to define in such a way as to cover all and only the situations in which it can be used. Wittgenstein says:

> "Consider, for example, the proceedings that we call 'games'. I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic-games, and so on. What is common to them all? - Don't say: "There MUST be something common, or they would not be called 'games'" - but LOOK and SEE whether there is anything common to all. - For if you look at them you will see not something that is common to all, but similiarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that ..... I can think of no better expression to characterize these similiarities than 'family resemblances' ..... And I shall say that 'games' form a family"
> (Philosophical Investigations, `66-`67)

It is therefore quite possible, if they too are a family, for there to be no one clear definition of what organizations are.

However, this possibility has not deterred social scientists from proceeding on the assumption that a comprehensive definition of organization is both possible and desirable. But the numerous conflicting versions testify to the difficulty of framing such a definition, and also to the hazards of taking any definition of this type as a statement about what the usage of the word actually is. This arises because it is often less than clear whether a definition is an ostensive derivation or a stipulation. The difference between the two is the way they are

established. We establish an ostensive definition by saying or indicating how a word is used; we point out instances of the term we are defining until the meaning is made clear - when our audience begins to use the word correctly, for instance. We can easily define even 'family' words like 'game' in this way, as well as more scientific concepts like flowers or clouds. The great virtue of an ostensive definition is that it is not merely compatible with, but is in fact derived from, the ordinary use of the word. Its disadvantage is that it is almost impossible to use such a definition as a basis for analysis. This is because our defining process relates to the totality of what goes to make up whatever we are talking about, whilst analysis proceeds by isolating and exploring facets of this whole.

Stipulative definitions are statements as to how a word or concept shall be used. They are prescriptive, not arising from experience, but imposing themselves on reality. The classic exponent of this type of definition was Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, who said "words mean what I want them to mean, no more, no less". Such a procedure is by no means illogical, especially when inventing new words. But the disadvantage of stipulating one's definitions is that no relation has been established between such a definition and reality. All too commonly this results in what Flew has called 'The no-true-Scotsman fallacy' - we define a Scotsman as someone who wears a kilt, and prove from this that Boswell was no true Scot because he wore trousers. This is a result of stipulating a definition, and then using it ostensively (as if it had been derived from a list of all those people agreed to be Scotsmen).

This begging of questions by using stipulative definitions as if they were ostensive ones was a fault of many of the classic social scientists, or their later interpreters. Popper devoted a large part of his time to castigating both Marx and Freud for the supposedly totalitarian sin of forcing reality into a stipulated model, and we shall devote space later to the problems arising from Weber's influential stipulations. More clearly, Lukes

castigates Durkheim when his

> "very definition of religion as uniting its adherents into a single moral community presupposes one of the central theses of the work, while his hypothesis that collective effervescences generate religious beliefs and rites presupposes those very beliefs and rites, since the effervescences are expressions of them"
> (S.Lukes, 'Durkheim', p.31)

But Lukes also points out his opinion that this vice (of 'petitio principii') was 'more damaging to the presentation of his ideas than the value of his explanations'. This brings us to a related difference between ostensive and stipulative definitions; the former are either correct or incorrect, whilst the latter are either useful or useless. We judge their worth differently. For example, we can define the concept of a religion ostensively, by listing religions - Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, Shinto and so on - and then saying that what they have in common is what makes a religion a religion. If our list included Antidisestablishmentarianism and Cynicism though, it might be judged to be incorrect by other users of the word 'religion'. Or conversely, our list may be too narrow rather than too wide. If we only included Catholicism, Anglicanism, Mormonism, Presbyterianism, Methodism and Baptists, it might be judged incorrect because of the implication (which may have been deliberate) that only varieties of Christianity are religions. A stipulative definition of religion, on the other hand, might be that all religions have some statement to make as to Humanity's place in the universe and our relationship with forces greater than those of this world. Now this may have been arrived at by a derivation, after due philosophical reflection, from the list generated by the ostensive process carried out above, in which

case its acceptability is empirically determined. But for the sake of argument, let us regard it as a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Depending on our interests, it may be either useful or useless.But it cannot be termed either correct or incorrect as a definition as long as it doesn't pretend to be anything more than a stipulation. Durkheim, had he presented his definition as a stipulation, would not have been guilty of logical error in its use. And that is why it can be said the damage was one of presentation only.

Clearly, it is important to realize what sort of definitions we are working with, because that determines the use to which they can be put. A stipulation is of quite a different nature to a statement derived from an empirical ostensive list, and the two must not be confused.

TYPOLOGIES

A common way of getting around these problems is through the use of a typology (or scheme of classification) of some sort rather than a strict definition. A typology has the great advantage that it need not necessarily deal with the entire scope of a concept, and can therefore be used to tackle the 'family' type of concept referred to earlier, for which no definition may be possible. Typologies also combine many of the advantages of both ostensively deduced propositions and stipulations. They share with the former the advantage of having direct links to common usage, and with the latter they share the rather useful property of being neither correct nor incorrect, neither true nor false, but only useful or useless. For example, we can easily construct a typology of games: there are card games, ball games, board games and so on. A typology of this sort may be only partial, or incomplete, in which case it can be completed by the simple expedient of adding a residual category consisting of all games which are neither card games, ball games or board games. Or else it may be left incomplete, which may not make it any less

useful, as long as its limitations are understood clearly. A typology is simply a tool for analysis.

Incompatible typologies need not necessarily conflict (unlike incompatible definitions). For instance, we can easily divide games into competing team games, individual competing games, co-operative games and solo games. Whilst this is a completely different typology to the first one we constructed, being based on modes of participation rather than kind of equipment, it is apparent that the two have different uses depending on circumstances, or the features most of interest to us - if we are selling games, the first is of more use, whilst the second is better if we are investigating use of leisure time.

A third advantage of a typology is that it can be made up of ideal types. In this case, we don't even have to expect that any of the cases we use to ostensively illustrate our typology exist in reality at all. The types are one-sided accentuations of reality, whose aim is to facilitate our understanding of what does happen by comparing the ideal type with reality - a sort of platonism stood on its head. (For Plato, reality was an imperfect reflection of ideal types whilst for modern social theorists, following Weber, ideal types are an imperfect reflection of reality.)

Our attention is focused on the theoretical dimension used to construct the type. A good example would be the division of political systems into democracies, dictatorships, totalitarian states, and so on. The perfect democracy never has existed - both the ancient Greeks and Thomas Jefferson owned slaves - but we recognize the usefulness of the ideal-typical concept of a democracy without a qualm. But as with all typologies, this one is either useful or not. It is always possible that there is some dimension of reality which a typology of any kind does not properly bring out. We can then try and construct an alternative to supplement or replace our existing tools.

ORGANIZATIONAL FORM

The reason why we've been discussing these issues of typologies and of different kinds of definitions and their limitations is because they are basic to an understanding of the scope of what we will try and do. We'll be talking about organizations, but with the intention of bringing out some aspects of organization which are not within the scope of any organization theory in wide use. The intention is to develop a framework which is capable of giving previously unexplored aspects of organization the primacy they need, in order to be able to successfully analyze organizations presently relegated to the 'residual' category we discussed earlier. Such a theoretical framework will have its limitations, and cannot pretend to encompass every possible issue in an equally fruitful way. So when we generalize about organization, we shall take it as read that any such generalization is likely to be useful in some circumstances and not in others. In the rest of this thesis, the qualifications we have just made regarding all such frameworks and typologies will not be repeated. One, because it would be boring; and two, because purely stylistically, it does no good at all to be continually pointing out deficiencies or inadequacies.

The framework being developed applies to a particular form of organization, though it might well be useful in understanding aspects of any. The word 'form' is used deliberately here, because the common alternative to it, 'type' is too vague in its uses. As we have seen, a typology can be constructed about almost any criterion - there are typologies of organization based on types of authority (Weber), types of coercion (Etzioni), types of beneficiary (Blau and Scott), types of input (Vickers), types of function (Katz and Kahn) and so on. One of the consequences of using types is that the criterion used as a differentiator within one can so easily be taken as a fundamental characteristic of

organization generally, especially when presented in an imposing manner with a suggested definition attached. Many organizations may on some classifications be of different types, whereas they may appear as the same type on others. Let us apply this consideration to organizational form.

For instance, the British Army and the Salvation Army may well appear to be different types of organization - one is an organ of the State, the other is not, one is spiritual (but teetotal) and the other is not (twice!). On other typologies, they may appear of the same type - both are non-profit making organizations, for example. Yet none of these criteria say anything about the form of the organization - about the relationship between the individual parts - in this case, the persons involved. Though I've never been a member of either of them, the form appears to be the same: indeed, the Salvation Army was modelled on the British Army, so this is not entirely unexpected. The distinction between form and content is a fairly old one, but hasn't been properly applied to organizations before. The form of an organization is nothing to do with the products, inputs, or other contents of an organization, but is about the relationship between the parts that make up the whole. The reason why form is fundamental to an organization is because, unlike any other criterion, it is about the way it is organized. To use an obvious analogy, the form of two buildings may be identical, whilst the uses to which they are put, the colour, age, methods of construction and condition might all be different. Simmel wrote that:

> "Any social phenomenon or process is composed of two elements, which in reality are inseparable; on the one hand, an interest, a purpose or a motive; on the other, a form or mode of interaction among individuals through which, or in the shape of which, that content attains reality."

("The Problem of Sociology" in Simmel's "On Individuality and Social Forms", ed. Levine, p.24)

It all depends on what you are interested in really: but if you are interested in the organization of Organizations, you have to look at the form. Some people might be happier with the word 'structure' in this context rather than 'form' - the two perhaps are interchangeable. (Mathematicians might prefer to talk about 'organizational topology', which is in many ways more exact.)

One thing which must be made clear is that this notion of form is in no way related to the idea of a 'formal organization'. This is usually taken to be the prescribed (legally) relationships of power, authority and discipline, promotional procedures, hiring, firing and so on - a formal organization is one with such binding discernible forms built in. Informal organization is usually taken to be the unprescribed and unanticipated patterns and networks which emerge between people in a formal organization. Neither is formless though; the distinction between form and content is separate from that between formal and informal. To be philosophical for a while, the formal/informal distinction is not one which matters to an organization qua organization. The relationships the distinction is concerned with are peripheral to its nature in a logical rather than a practical sense. Whereas the relationships which go to make up the form are of the essence of the organization. They are the skeleton on which the people, their rules, habits and relationships are hung. Not that the form can exist independently of people (except in an abstract sense) since they must internalize it as the basis of their behaviour for it to exist. The form of an organization is the relationships between people not as individuals, but as members, and their relationship with what they see as the collectivity comprising their organization. (It's worth noting that in an organization with formal and informal relationships, it is perfectly possible for the form of

those different aspects to be different also. The child who comes bottom of the class may be the informal leader of the classroom).

To continue this point, it is obvious that in the initial stages at least (that is, reading the preceding paragraph once only) reference to different forms rather than types doesn't necessarily make understanding any easier. There is no reason to expect the same form to appear in everything an organization does. Forms are not static. School prefects don't mark exams, and an army in the field is very different to one in the barracks at peace. Whether or not this indicates change in organizational form is something which can only be determined by subsequent analysis. The form of an organization can change as easily as (or at least with no more difficulty than) its content; but the form is about the way it is organized, not what it does or even why.

The form-content distinction which is being developed here is clearly related to many others. The ancient Greek form-substance springs to mind, but there are also clear affinities with Chomsky's competence-performance distinction in linguistics, which may well run deeper than is apparent. Gregory Bateson's context-content one also is strikingly similiar.

> "Message material, or information, comes out of a content into a context .....Here the focus is on the internal state ... as a context into which the information must be received."
> (From the Comment on Part III of 'Steps to an Ecology of Mind', p.370)

The information we can accumulate about an organization's work, as well as the information it may itself work with, is mediated by the form the organization has, the way the individuals are organized. Clearly, a form isn't the same as a type, though a taxonomy of forms is certainly possible. There has been surprisingly little attention paid to the distinction. Weber's

pioneering classification of organization (at the beginning of 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft') was one of forms, but even he never made the distinction very explicit. Indeed, the very possibility of more than one organizational form is often denied - an organization is assumed to be a pyramid, of hierarchical form. As the ubiquitous Humpty Dumpty said: "The question is who is to be master, that's all". Herbst tells how, when giving a talk on alternatives to hierarchies, "one of the queries raised was 'surely, what you mean are flat hierarchies'". Perhaps this blindness is caused because current political fashions are closely related to both the state of mind in which we approach such questions, and, particularly, to any current paradigms within social science. If we discuss alternative ways of organizing, the possibility of there being alternative ways of organizing a society is an application which threatens, by definition, all vested interests and establishment values. Most of the works which have been about organizational forms neither recognize what they are about nor develop the wider political content - Burns and Stalker's otherwise excellent 'Management of Innovation' is a good example of this. Conversely, Lewin's famous work on organizational forms in boys' clubs does develop this connection with politics, but only because it was seen by both Lewin (a refugee from totalitarianism himself) and his public (with their own political preoccupations of a similiar nature) as proving what a Good Thing Democracy Is (because we now have experimental proof that it works best!) There are some people who have tried to develop this in the reverse direction, and say things about organizational form starting from a wider social and political perspective (for instance, Geoffrey Vickers' "Freedom in a Rocking Boat", Donald Schon's "Beyond the Stable State" and Gordon Rattray Taylor's "Rethink", to name but a few). However, such attempts haven't succeeded in developing a framework suitable for discussing organizational forms; indeed, they don't really try to, starting from the practical rather than the theoretical premise.

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONAL FORM

This brings us back to the language problems with which we started. Had we tried at the very beginning to discuss voluntary organizations, almost anyone would have thought they knew what was meant. But having seen the hurdles which are in the way of using ordinary language concepts, we are now in a position to take them one by one. Clearly, the term 'voluntary organization' is part of an implicit classification scheme for organizations, and as such is either useful or not. But its meaning is fuzzy and imprecise; it is used in at least two acknowledged ways, and a third is implied often enough to engender even more confusion. Our attention is therefore not directed to one main feature of the organization under discussion, and various conjuring tricks (which are conscious) or confusions (which are not) can easily manifest themselves.

One of the two major ways in which the term 'voluntary' is taken is in opposition to 'statutory'; a voluntary organization in this sense is one which has neither been set up by government statute, nor is directly responsible to any organization or institution which has been so set up. Statutory organizations are a part of government, and are (in theory at least) accountable to the general public through their elected representatives. In this sense, statutory is often used in conjunction with 'authority' whilst voluntary is not.

The second main way in which the term 'voluntary' is used is in opposition to 'paid'; a voluntary organization in this sense is volunteer-based. Often nowadays there are voluntary (unpaid) workers in the statutory sector, but this would not blur the distinction. A voluntary organization in this sense would have to consist almost entirely of people who were unpaid, not employees, and not doing their work for a living. This is quite clearly a different usage of the term even though some groups may qualify under both headings. We ought to note here that both these senses

of voluntary deal with content rather than form.

There is a third sense of the word 'voluntary' which is implied in the senses discussed above, and which does relate to the form of an organization. In the Wolfenden Report on 'The Future of Voluntary Organizations' (which is mostly concerned with the statutory-voluntary opposition) reference is made to the ability of voluntary organizations to

> "share much of the spontaneity and flexibility of informal relationships, attract the support and loyalty of the groups affected and react quickly to changes in demand."

There's a formal distinction being touched on here (i.e. one of form). The implication is clearly that there is some difference in the way the groups are organized, but no attempt is made to say precisely what it might be. One may frequently find other commentators, each week in New Society for instance, making references to the 'voluntary nature' of an organization. It is with this often implicit, less articulated sense of voluntary that we are concerned. The distinction to be drawn is between a voluntary and a compulsory organization. In a voluntary organization of this third kind, people do things because they want to, or choose to; whereas in a compulsory organization they do things because they have been told to by someone else.

> "It seems that I and everybody else around me exist only to follow commands. The other day I had a shocking experience. In a conversation I had with one of the office workers, neither of us could remember the last time we did anything that was genuinely voluntary. ..... Our society is divided into order takers and order givers."

(Kirke Comstocke, 'Letter from the Mayor', in 'Reinventing Anarchy' ed. Ehrlich et al.)

Voluntary organizations are systems of free choice, perceived need - systems of expressive rationality. Compulsory organizations are systems of duty, coercion and authority - systems of instrumental rationality. Or to put things in a simpler way, the key question in a voluntary organization is why people agree, and the key question in a compulsory organization is why people obey. The very stuff of which organizations are made is different in each. The relationships between members and between individuals and the group are qualitatively different in each case, so this third distinction is one of form. There is no obvious reason why a statutory organization should differ qualitatively from a non-statutory one, and whilst pay is undoubtedly a major incentive for much work, it is conceivable that an organization could drop the link between money and work and still keep the same form. However, the form of a compulsory organization must (and this is a stipulative definition) enable orders to be given and taken, responsibilities to be formulated and assigned, and sanctions to be held in reserve to keep everything in equilibrium. Contrariwise (as Tweedledee would put it) a voluntary organization must be built around the ability of people to make and take their own decisions, perceive and accept their own responsibilities. The quality of relationships - and their context - is different. We have a difference of form.

The difference of form is somewhat complicated by the fact that most of the best examples of voluntary organizational form are voluntary in all the other senses too. We could mention playgroups, weightwatchers, women's groups of various kinds (rape counselling, consciousness-raising, battered women's aid), housing co-operatives, tenants associations, claimants unions: all are non-statutory and mostly unpaid. In fact, much of the usefulness of concentrating on the voluntary form arise from its ability to analyse the tensions arising in such a form of

organization when it also has statutory connections and paid employees. A further complication lies in the fact that most people associate such voluntary organizations with human social services: and, as a matter of fact, that is where they are most concentrated. There is a reason for this. It is due to the fact that whatever their other merits may be, voluntary organizations seem to be less efficient at generating profits. This is a phenomenon which is easily enough explained by anyone with a nodding acquaintance with Marxist analysis - since surplus labour value has historically been the major source of profit, any organization in which people work voluntarily will have less surplus labour value because we would not expect people to agree to their own exploitation. In any event, this disadvantage at generating profit makes voluntary organizations less competitive with other organizational forms in capitalist economies, so they are relatively more abundant in the social service sector as it is furthest removed from commercial considerations such as profit margins, cost-benefit analyses and so on. So if a reader supposed that this thesis was about voluntary social services, they might not necessarily be disappointed; but this need not have been the case. The fact that that is the sector with the densest concentration of voluntary organizations doesn't necessarily imply that they cannot, in principle, thrive anywhere else, and equally doesn't imply that voluntary organizational form has anything but a contingent link with social services.

ORGANIZATIONS AND MORALS

There is a further reason why social service organizations are the most suitable areas for an analysis of voluntary forms of organization. This is because health, education, welfare, housing and all the other areas of social provision are more often the subject of the kinds of moral judgements and ethical considerations which more commercially productive activity is generally immune from. Moral philosophy is an area of much debate

even (or especially) among philosophers: but one thing which most people agree on is that right or wrong actions, and assigning praise or blame, is very closely linked to the free will of the actor. There is an extensive philosophical literature on the concept of action and intentionality related to this. When Oedipus killed his father and married his mother, he didn't actually know what he was doing, and though views on the murder may have changed, he would probably not be convicted by a modern jury of incest. When someone in Wilkie Collins' book 'The Moonstone' stole the aforementioned gem whilst sleepwalking under a medicinal overdose of laudanum, no culpability attached to the theft because he wasn't conscious of what he was doing. Similiarly, Lt. Calley of the United States Army was only convicted of the massacre at My Lai in Vietnam because he was an officer. Had he been able to show that he had only been obeying orders rather than actually bearing the responsibility for giving them himself, he might well (however inappropriately) have been acquitted. In other words, an action is only good or bad if the person performing it could have acted otherwise.

Even though we've observed that social services are often the subject of moral judgements - about rightness and wrongness - (going to visit old age pensioners is usually considered to be a good and worthy thing to do) it is clear that there is nothing especially holy about it if the person doing the visiting is a social worker with such a person on their caseload. This is because they are doing their job, under orders from their organizational superior, and haven't any choice in the matter. They could not have acted otherwise, in their organizational capacity - possibly they can't stand old age pensioners and given a choice would much rather visit approved schools instead. Perhaps becoming a social worker in the first place, or continuing to be one under atrocious conditions and low pay, is a good action: but there is nonetheless a paradox here. The sorts of action we attribute worth to are carried out in compulsory organizations, which precludes the attribution of moral standards

to individual actions to the extent that they are in line with the call of duty (though we reserve the right to judge when that duty is exceeded, and, as mentioned before, can judge the acceptance or continuation of a duty when a person has a right to terminate it) . Society often congratulates itself for appointing people to do the job in the first place. After all, we didn't use to have social service departments.

Voluntary organizations, by definition, do not de-moralize such work, since their essence is the individual choice of, and responsibility for, actions. Compulsory organizations do not allow for this: they are essentially about individuals fulfilling pre-ordained roles the content of which they are not responsible for. Employees do not as a rule write their own job specifications. It has even been put forward as a definition of organization that it is

> "a social unit where individuals ....
> legitimate their co-operative activities
> primarily by reference to impersonal goals
> rather than moral standards."
> (Martin Albrow 'The Study of Organizations -
> Objectivity or Bias ?' in the Penguin Social
> Science Survey 1968, ed. Gould, p.162)

Employees of compulsory organizations surrender their ability to act morally; unless, as employees, they break rules or bend them. In such cases they aren't acting as members of their organization, and would probably be disowned if found out. They can regain their independence only by acting outside the organization. (This view is extreme: but see below for the ideal-typical nature of compulsory and voluntary as applied to organizations).

Studying voluntary organizations can therefore bring out more clearly the differences between it and the compulsory form, because the organization is a pooling of individual free wills,

with choices at all times open to its members. They may not always make decisions on moral grounds, but since they are individually responsible such actions could be morally evaluated. Clearly, voluntary organizations do have rules in many cases: but our analysis of the form is only just beginning. The differences the rules make can only be worked out when we know our area better, and would in any case be difficult to generalize about.

ORGANIZATIONAL FORM AS A HEURISTIC PARADIGM

For now, it is clear that we are working with an ideal form - an ideal-typical construction used to accentuate the aspects of the organization we are most interested in. (See Weber's discussion of ideal types in 'The Theory of Social and Economic Organization', or any of the commentaries thereon for background on ideal types). This brings us back directly to what organizational form precisely is. Whilst we've mentioned already that definitions of organizations are risky to attempt, a necessary condition (as one can see from any list) would seem to be that organization is co-ordinated activity by human beings. Clearly, this is by no means a sufficient condition; it includes two people dancing, playing chess or making love as well as comprising the workforce of British Rail. But it does provide us with a starting point of analysis, and it is probably best to leave any further conditions to common sense. Focussing on organization as one type of co-ordinated human activity, we can begin an analysis by identifying the method or methods of co-ordination. Now we don't need a full typology of forms - playing the typology game to its limit would be a red herring as we are only interested in one type of organization - or rather, one form. But for the sake of clarity, we can identify two polar methods of co-ordination. They are imperative co-ordination, and voluntary co-ordination. The former is ultimately rooted in coercion, and the latter in agreement. It is the second type of co-ordination in which we are interested.

The first form of co-ordination has in any case been analysed in detail, beginning with Max Weber, who used the term 'Herrschaft', variously translated as imperative control or as authority. Weber categorized organizations on the basis of the kind of legitimation used for this imperative co-ordination, and his tripartite division into traditional, charismatic and rational-legal kinds of authority is both well-known and influential. All organizations covered by this type of analysis ought to be of the same form, being compulsory organizations needing legitimation of their compulsion. Our problem here is that the very language we use and the way we think about organizational sociology is biased in the direction of this form, and is not only inadequate in discussing organizations of a voluntary form, but is also downright misleading, as authority isn't a central issue for them.

The need to be aware of the inadequacies of ordinary language, with which we opened, also extends itself to the inadequacies of sociological language as far as this is concerned. In order to minimize this problem - that traditional organization theory assuming authority and based on content is inapplicable - we can amend our own usage by bringing in some general categories. The category of organization with imperative co-ordination is a hierarchy (someone must exert the authority over others) and the category of organization with voluntary co-ordination we shall call a mutual-aid group. General categories are blunt instruments, and aren't at all exact, and tend to be inaccurate in hard cases. What we mean by them is simply and crudely this. All organizations are put into one of two baskets; one is labelled 'HIERARCHY' and the other one bears the legend 'MUTUAL-AID GROUP'. Any organization can be put into any basket; all the ones where we are mostly interested in the control, discipline, aims and goals are assigned to the hierarchy basket, and will be analysed as if they were based on imperative co-ordination, using the whole battery of tools developed by classic organizational and management theorists. Someone else - not me -

can have that basket. The ones where we are most interested in the agreements between the individuals and how they go to make up an organizational whole will be put in the mutual-aid basket, and analysed as if they were based on voluntary co-ordination, using tools which can only be developed with an adequate theory of mutual-aid groups. We hope to develop that later on.

An analogy will make this clearer. The medical profession deals with (mostly) pathological states of the human organism in a roughly similar fashion. Doctors have their two baskets, labelled 'diseases' and 'conditions', the former being caused by agents (bacteria, viruses) and the latter by injury or infirmity or nothing in particular (they don't know). Contrast measles and broken bones if this is unclear. There are some phenomena about which doctors know very little, like multiple sclerosis, eczema or cancer. Whether these are diseases - have causal agents susceptible to elimination - is unclear. Some medical research is carried out on the assumption that cancer, for example, is caused by something - cancer is assigned to the 'disease' basket. Other researchers assign it to the 'condition' basket and proceed along different lines. The treatment of these things by doctors in our example is analogous to our treatment of organizations, which can be treated either as hierarchies or as mutual-aid groups. And just as western medicine is more developed in one direction - it deals almost exclusively in the pathological model - organization theory is too. The assumption that there is a disease is easier for most doctors to work with. Indeed, the criticism of some remedy which doesn't look for a causal agent as treating symptoms, not causes, has passed from medicine to many other disciplines. It may be valid in some cases, but it is quite possible that the person being criticized is working with a different conception of the form of the problem, in which there are no treatable causes, only symptoms.

Our notion of an organizational form thus assumes the status of a heuristic paradigm rather than a theory or typology. We can only justify it by comparing the insights it gives us with those

afforded by alternative paradigms. Unlike Chomskyan linguistics, we cannot look at an organization as if it were a sentence and discern beneath all the garbage what its form really and truly is. I leave it to others to generate a generative grammar of human organization. In talking about mutual-aid groups as a distinct organizational form, the intention is that there should be a clear disjunction of meaning and theory behind the words we use.

For any organization, there will be some parts which are better understood if the organization is looked at in hierarchical terms: this applies in some respects to voluntary organizations, and in those respects our concentration on one kind of analysis only is bound to appear deficient. But equally, in any organization there will be some aspects which are better understood by viewing them (as far as those aspects are concerned) as voluntary organization - and this applies to the most authoritarian organizations too. Most organizations inevitably will partake of both natures. If this sounds schizophrenic, it only reflects reality. Historically, the voluntary aspects of organizations have been dubbed 'informal' organization, and can easily be seen as an irritant which stops the 'real' parts of the organization from functioning. Far from being an irritant, they represent those voluntary aspects of the organization which are not easily subsumed in a managerial model. So when we consider our own experiences of organizations, the parts that don't fit neatly into one analytic form do not invalidate it: they merely are best looked at under a different one.

MUTUAL AID AND MUTUAL BENEFIT GROUPS

Thus the disjunction, though clear in theory, is a matter of perspective in practice. Again we find that words we wish to reserve for our own use have been partially pre-empted by social scientists in a different context. The term 'mutual-benefit'

group has already achieved a certain popularity through the work of Blau and Scott. This use of the term is as part of a typology based on the criteria 'cui bono', who benefits. Four categories of beneficiary are identified: owners, as in business concerns; clients, in service organizations; the public, in commonweal organizations; and members in mutual benefit groups. The criticism has been made by others that it is often an open question as to who precisely the prime beneficiaries of an organization are, but our concerns are different. The typology is clearly one of content rather than of form, and the categories in it can be of either of our forms. A business concern is of voluntary form when it is a workers' co-operative, as are many commonweal organizations such as lifeboat services. And mutual benefit groups in Blau and Scott's sense are by no means always mutual-aid groups in ours. The prime beneficiaries of a trade union are supposedly the members, but a trade union not only has a clear hierarchy and system of disciplinary sanctions, but is also not necessarily joined as an act of will by individuals (which is not meant to be a political criticism of the closed shop, but merely an observation relating to the organizational form). Service organizations are a more difficult category, for insofar as they involve professionals and clients, they are intrinsically hierarchical. To run a service organization as a mutual-aid group involves radically altering the idea of what a profession is on all sides - women's self-health clinics are a good example of all this entails. As Illich has pointed out, in their present form, professions are intrinsically disabling. Authority and authoritativeness become easily and disastrously mixed up.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Our disjunction between hierarchical and mutual-aid groups is thus not equivalent to a typology of content, whether it appears to involve the same terms or not. Further, it is not

empirically derived, but theoretical - we have two perspectives rather than two types (though we shall be using them as if they were types). This may seem to be just an exercise in hedging bets, but in reality we are steering a narrow course between various obstacles. We do have something new to discuss but it isn't universal in its relevance. We don't want to invent totally new words, but at the same time we don't want to fight misconceptions as to prior use of our terms in different contexts with different meanings. And while we are making a distinction of sorts, it can't be applied everywhere. Our form is like listening to a short-wave radio with a bad aerial - the station comes through but with low selectivity, so you have to concentrate to pick out the station you want and filter out the noise. The other stations are still there, but unless you ignore them, you cannot understand anything at all.

To repeat: look at the way something is organized to find out its organizational form, look at the way people co-ordinate their activities. If this is achieved by voluntary agreement, analyse it as a mutual-aid group; if it is achieved by people obeying instructions, analyse it as a hierarchy.

The discussion of voluntary and compulsory forms in this introductory chapter is genuinely introductory: the area is essential enough to what follows to warrant the fullest treatment, but by the same token it is also an area we will take for granted in future. The concept of organizational form is one we will henceforth use - and ideally, if this chapter has done its work properly, its use will be uncontentious.

CHAPTER TWO

CHAPTER TWO

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESEARCH AND VALUES

Research can often be divided into two types; descriptive research, which is factually oriented; and evaluative, or value based research. Descriptive research is supposedly concerned merely with describing reality, whilst evaluative research is also concerned with judging what is good or bad about reality, what works and what does not. A census is as good an example of descriptive research as any; it consists of simple head counts, and is thus purely descriptive. Examples of evaluative research are to be found in criminology. To investigate the causes of juvenile delinquency, for example, will inevitably assume that it is a Bad Thing, and in practice, one tends to look for causes and explanations not simply for their descriptive value, but because they facilitate intervention. Once the causes of crime are known, crime can be abolished. Descriptive research is considered to be objective in its entirety, whilst evaluative research has definite subjective elements built in.

This distinction is crude, and in the form that has just been sketched is probably not held by many people today, if indeed it ever was. The accepted view is that all research, and indeed all social science, is bound to incorporate subjective elements for a number of reasons. First, and most obviously, the model of descriptive research outlined above is nonsensical. In order to describe anything, one must decide what to describe, and this entails a choice. Pure descriptive research without such a choice is impossible to envisage, and a choice is a subjective element. Descriptive research is thus not pure and simple description. It is an impossibility. To describe the way people

might be fraudulently claiming social security benefits, for instance, is not entirely a value-free project. Even granted that someone might do it truthfully, and with no bias, the political and social implications of the research are significant enough for most people to speculate about the motivations of the researchers involved. Why, some might ask, did the researcher not include any figures on unclaimed benefits as well? In the same way, a newspaper might be factually correct in all its reports, but by its selection of which facts to report, it may (and usually does) attempt to induce certain political views in its readers. The full coverage of the atrocities of only one side in a war would inevitably induce an innocent and otherwise uninformed reader to assume that the other side was entirely innocent of any such misdeeds (especially when the other side is British). And the full frontal coverage of female bodies, in the absence of any other competitive reporting, induces readers to regard women as sex objects and nothing else. And the examples of biased research and reporting I have decided to include here no doubt contain their own bias too.

Going back to our census after that brief digression into journalism, the hypothetical descriptive researcher behind it may well ask people what colour their skin is, but avoid asking them what colour their eyes are. Whilst it is a matter of fact that skin colour happens to be vastly more important than eye colour in the world today, the point is that this global importance is what has been used in deciding which parts of the human body carry socially significant pigmentation, and subjective cultural notions about skin colour find their way even into this descriptive survey. The first question to be asked about any researcher establishing, or reporting, facts is: why these facts and not others; why do you think this is important; why did you decide to do this, in this way; in short, we must ask what values motivate them.

Another way in which values enter into social science is in the language used to discuss the research and frame its categories. For example, the criminologist might choose to talk about 'convicts' or 'criminals' rather than simply about people in prison. It is clear that the emotive content of the former is far greater than that of the latter - both convict and criminal carry subjective meanings, associations with guilt and innocence, good and evil. The fashionable word to use nowadays is 'offender', which I suppose is used to avoid emotive reactions. Many of the words we use to describe reality also incorporate a view of it, and an evaluation of worth, and not all of them are adjectives. Sometimes we do this deliberately and sometimes unconsciously. But this added content is always going to be there. There are thus at least two ways in which values intrude into even the most impeccably descriptive piece of research, and into the peccable kind as well. None of it is immune. Additionally, much descriptive research does try and suggest various causal chains, as well as simply describing what occurs, and in such cases there is a clear subjective element. Speculation is valuable, but has to be biased.

Evaluative research is sometimes quite open about the values which necessarily motivate it; this is an area of historic concern in sociology, and social scientists are brought up with problems of value-freedom from an early stage in their education. But the recommended Weberian solution of acknowledging and admitting the values involved is not always done, especially when they are taken for granted as the audience is expected to share them. For instance, John Bowlby's famous study of forty thieves assumes that the reader shares the same reverence for private property, and the abhorrence of stealing he does: the conclusion that the maternal deprivation which his cases shared is harmful (notice the emotive content 'deprivation') rests on the unstated value as much as on any fact. Bowlby simply assumes that stealing is wrong. A society which lived by pilferage would probably decide that maternal deprivation was as conducive to the

maintenance of its own social order as it seems detrimental to ours.

A more complicated case brings out more aspects of this phenomenon. Imagine a researcher investigating whether probation was an effective sentence - whether or not it made people more or less likely to reoffend and come before the courts again. Within these limits, someone might well claim to have established certain facts, for example that 60% of all people put on probation were arrested again within two years, whereas only 40% of those given light custodial sentences were rearrested within two years of release. The conclusion that prison was more effective than probation would then be presented as a proven fact. Assuming most people were satisfied as to the controls on type of offences, people, courts and so on, the conclusions would be accepted, and lobbying would probably begin for more custodial sentences. But the researchers may have been so biased in favour of the assumption that some sort of punitive measure be given that they failed to uncover the fact that only 20% of a similar group given discharges reoffended! This fact would, were it known, lead to a whole new set of conclusions. And even the researcher may be unaware of this undiscovered fact,and the bias towards punishment of some kind in the work being done. We must assume that even in overtly evaluative social research, covert values remain undisclosed.

The conclusion that all social science research (as well as social aspects of physical and biological science) is ineradicably evaluative is neither new nor controversial. Yet value free social science is still held by many people to be a desirable end, even though values and motivations are subjective elements necessary to begin anything at all. Furthermore, unless values are attached to the end product, nobody would begin any enterprise of any kind. If something is not worth doing, it isn't worth doing well. At the same time, of course, communication, which is the ultimate goal in any public endeavour, does imply objective (or at least agreed) standards or parameters, means and

methods. For this reason, Weber's well tried and generally accepted solution to the problem - the statement of my own motives and values - is going to be adopted here, as the least confusing course of action.

A DECLARATION OF VALUES: WHAT WE MEAN BY ANARCHY

Normally, of course, it is considered neither necessary nor desirable for anyone to feel they have to indulge in methodological arguments such as the ones above in presenting either theory or empirical evidence. The reason why I've done so is to ensure that these old issues and basic questions concerning the relationships between research, practice, facts and values are going to be in the forefront of the reader's mind, and that the essential tolerance demanded in the need to reach the Weberian compromise will be extended here.

Most research in the social sciences, and in social administration in particular, is firmly based in the values and political ideologies current in the Welfare State. These are well enough understood for people to say that they are social democrats, fabians, marxists, socialists, liberals or even monetarists, and they will be understood and accepted - with reservations perhaps, but accepted nonetheless. The same cannot be said of Anarchism. (Shock! Horror! Bombs! Riots! Sabotage! Death, Destruction and Chaos! Rape, Pillage and Burn! The End Of Civilization As We Know It!) Anarchism is mostly feared and seldom understood, is used as a synonym for chaos and the absence of any order, and the admission of a belief in Anarchism is still considered to be evidence of guilt in political trials even today. Hopefully, the preceding discussion should have been a preparation for the acceptance of what is to follow, rather than a rejection on the flimsy grounds of unorthodoxy - it would, after all, be most unfair to agree that I ought to state my values and then reject them out of hand.

There is no point in spending pages on a dissertation about anarchist theory and practice, because the basic elements are easy to state and to comprehend. Anarchism is not chaos or terrorism. Its central thesis is that social life is both possible and desirable without centralized and coercive authority, and that in practice all centralized and coercive systems, especially states, serve only to maintain inequality, war, violence, misery, suffering and oppression, and the human race would be better off without them. They can be replaced with some form of ordered but decentralized and voluntary individually-based communal co-operation. This will come about not through violent revolution, since that creates its own rigid counter-revolution, but through eventual popular understanding of and increased practise at anarchist living. Anarchism is not coercive (many if not all anarchists profess some sort of pacifism for the reason that violence is coercive) and holds that people free of coercive authority would not be nasty, brutish and short but would act in general harmony. Anarchists do not reject all and any organization, only certain forms of organization. There is no clear blueprint for an anarchist society, since each person or group of people would be free to combine with others to live as they chose. It is conceivable that an otherwise anarchist world might contain an enclave of diehard monetarists dedicated to borrowing from each other at high interest rates in order to keep down their internal inflation rate. Many anarchists have speculated and experimented and there is a general consensus among them that an anarchist society would consist of federations and autonomous groups, linked in interlocking networks of voluntary association and mutual aid. There is a fairly substantial literature on the sort of social system anarchists would like to live in, as well as literature on what they dislike about most existing societies.

This emphasis on voluntary association is central, in precisely those words, in the writings of virtually all the classic anarchist thinkers. Tolstoy asked -

> "Why think that non-official people could not arrange their life for themselves, as well as government people can arrange it, not for themselves but for others?"

and he went on to answer his own question -

> "We see on the contrary that in the most diverse matters people arrange their lives incomparably better than those who govern arrange things for them."
> (From 'The slavery of our times', Tolstoy, rep. in 'The Anarchist Reader', ed. Woodcock, p.306)

And Kropotkin wrote in his article on 'Anarchism' for the eleventh edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica,

> "In a society developed along these (anarchist) lines, the voluntary associations which already now begin to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still greater extension so as to substitute themselves for the state in all its functions".
> (Reprinted in 'The Essential Kropotkin', ed. Capouya and Tompkins, p.108)

And point six of Malatesta's 'An Anarchist Programme' speaks of the

> "Organization of social life by means of free association .... created and modified to the wishes of their members ..... to which everybody, convinced by a feeling of overriding necessity, voluntarily submits."
> (Reprinted in 'Malatesta: Life and Ideas', ed. Richards, p.184)

The same emphasis is apparent in contemporary anarchist writers. For example, Colin Ward writes that

> "The very growth of the state and its bureaucracy, the giant corporation and its privileged hierarchy are ..... also giving rise to parallel organizations, counter organizations, alternative organizations which exemplify the anarchist method".
> (from 'Anarchy in Action',by C. Ward, p.137)

And Kirke Comstocke, the ex-Mayor of Palo Alto, California who (as we related earlier) couldn't remember the last time he did anything truly voluntary, concluded in his cri-de-coeur

> "It is only as free individuals that we can come together in voluntary association ..... and thus create a genuine community of social individuals."
> (in Ehrlich, op.cit p.368)

The voluntarist theme occurs over and over again in anarchist literature. It should be obvious by now what the inspiration of this research is. The reason for looking at mutual-aid groups, at

voluntary forms of organization, is because of the central place they occupy in anarchist theory. The principles of voluntary organization and their opposition to hierarchical ways of organizing is similarly a crucial concept. We must remember, with the Quaker activist George Lakey, that the way of organization is as important, if not more important, than simple independence from the state.

> "Service associations, veterans' groups, churches, unions - these and other organizations are part of the social fabric that supports the status quo in most oppressive systems."
> (Lakey, 'Strategy for a Living Revolution', p.80)

The possibility of an anarchist society, and the coherence of anarchism as political theory, depends almost entirely on the assumption that people can voluntarily associate and organize for their own mutual benefit. Malatesta even goes so far as to announce that -

> "were we to believe that organization was not possible without authority, we would be authoritarians, because we would still prefer authority, which fetters and impoverishes life, to disorganization, which makes life impossible"
> (from Richards op.cit. p.270)

Malatesta defined anarchy as 'society organized without authority' in the same passage. So, contrary to the popular image of anarchists as being opposed to any and every organization, we can see that anarchism is actually dependent on a particular view of what kind of organization is desirable.

The insistence on the possibility of organization without coercive and centralized authority is possibly the most central and crucial argument that anarchism makes. In this sense, anarchy as a political and social philosophy is clearly distinguishable from the vulgar use of the word as a synonym for disorganization and chaos so beloved of leader writers for the press. But although much of the opposition to anarchism stems from this failure to appreciate what it means to anarchists themselves, this isn't true of every critic. Many who have taken the time and the trouble to understand the philosophy of anarchism have based their rejection of it on the assertion that it wouldn't work, is totally impractical, and Kropotkin was an incurable and unrealistic optimist like every other person who believes in the possibilities of anarchism. George Bernard Shaw wrote an article entitled 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism' along these lines. Whatever view one takes, the nexus of the argument is clearly the word 'possible' - which is to say, the question should rightfully be regarded as an empirical one. Our subject matter thus becomes of vital importance.

If it can be demonstrated that mutual-aid groups and voluntary organizations on anarchist lines do, as a matter of fact, exist, then the possibility of an anarchist society must be given serious consideration. On the other hand, even if we cannot find any, this doesn't prove that anarchism is impossible: we may have been looking in the wrong places, or not looking hard enough, or our conceptual categories may be so unused to dealing with an anarchist organization that we might not be able (or might refuse) to recognize it if we fell over it. The logic is that of a political anthropology. To prove the possibility of a different form of social organization, it is necessary to find just one case in which it works - only one, that would be enough. Sizes of samples, statistical breakdowns of data and all the paraphernalia of quantitative sociology are irrelevant and unnecessary in this context, for we are dealing with a qualitative, existential question - one of ontology, of existence

or nonexistence. On one level then, we address ourselves to this problem. If one group of people can be found who organize an activity in such a way, then others can do it in other areas.

Bearing in mind the conceptual problem we touched on briefly - that we may not be able to recognize an anarchist organization as an organization even if one were in front of us - we will also find it necessary to clarify our socio-perceptual tools (or our theoretical spectacles). This is a prerequisite to the task.

VOLUNTARY GROUPS IN CURRENT SOCIETIES

On a totally different level of interest though, it is obvious that we don't live in an anarchist society, or even in anything approaching one - despite the view of Colin Ward, who opened his argument in 'Anarchy in Action' by asking

> "How would you feel if you discovered that the society in which you would really like to live was already here, apart from a few little local difficulties like exploitation, war, dictatorship and starvation? The argument of this book is that an anarchist society, a society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state ..... "

This view isn't necessarily wrong. Colin Ward simply isn't looking at society with the same perspective as everybody else. Most anarchists can see what he means, since they share his perspective, but lots of people are bound to think he is not making much sense. In L. Frank Baum's Oz books, the Emerald City was only green because the Wizard locked a pair of green-tinted spectacles over the eyes of anyone entering the gates. It is to those people who aren't sharing a common anarchist perspective

that the second level of this piece of research might nevertheless appeal. We might discover that mutual-aid groups and voluntaristic organizations do in fact exist. Clearly, whilst conceding that in theory this means that anarchism isn't wholly utopian, the vast mass of people might still maintain that it is an unlikely eventuality - that though not impossible in principle, it is in reality improbable. The question still remains for those who take this line as to the place of anarchistic groups and organizations which do function in an otherwise state-governed system. Is it possible to have a kind of mixed society with a centralized state and multinational corporations co-existing with well-developed mutual-aid groups, or is the situation one which is inherently unstable due to incompatible philosophies? It is perfectly possible for the patterns of individual and group behaviour in such mutual aid groups as do exist to be so radically different to the behaviour of the same group of people in the rest of social life as to result in the absorption of such groups back into the prevailing social structure. The process could be conceived of as being the same type of phenomenon as the disintegration of tribal and other indigenous cultures under the impact of western inspired mass culture and industrialization, dried baby milk, agribusiness, motor cars and transistor radios (not to mention tanks and rifles). On the other hand, it may be the case that both mutual aid groups and large institutionalized bureaucracies can not only co-exist, but do so symbiotically like the birds that perch on crocodiles and elephants and eat their ticks at the same time.

So we shall also be looking for the role of any mutual aid groups we may find, at how they develop and grow in our welfare state. Will they become dependent on the state, or will it co-opt them? Is co-existence possible between authoritarianism and voluntarism, or is tension and strain inevitable? Perhaps the distinction will turn out not to be a useful one to try and draw. Questions such as these are as important in the current social context of the breakdown of the popular consensus as to

what the welfare state really is, whether it will continue in its present form, and what might replace it as the paradigm of social reality. Even people who neither believe in nor are committed to anarchism may believe still that mutual-aid groups and voluntarist organizations on the lines anarchists advocate have an important and valuable role to play in any society. And, as a matter of fact, it is very rare for any members of the sort of groups that anarchists like to point at as being the sort of thing they would like to see spread, to profess to be anarchists themselves. For example, Kropotkin was fond of pointing at lifeboat services as an example of anarchy in action, despite the fact that neither he nor anyone else discovered (or ever expected to find) the lifeboat crews putting out to sea in gale-force winds wearing black and red jerseys and singing about Joe Hill or the Chicago martyrs. The point is that it doesn't matter to the nature of the group - on the contrary, to prove the possibility of an anarchist society the more different such people are from the prototype anarchist of popular imagination - or the prototype anarchist of anarchist imagination for that matter - the better evidence the case will be.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND VOLUNTARIST ORGANIZATION THEORY

I think that I've now made clear the values and motives which inspire the ideas I'm presenting, and that the usefulness of the results that they give can be appreciated without having to agree with those values. As far as the way I present them is concerned, it should be obvious that (going back to the distinction with which we began) this research is essentially evaluative rather than descriptive. That is to say, the phenomena I'm concerned with and the concepts to be developed are not dealt with for their own sake (even though they may well be of intrinsic worth also) but in connection with issues and problems which I think are important in a wider context than an academic one.

It is quite probable that as well as bringing these declared commitments and values into the work, I'm bringing in some unconscious ones as well. For this I can only apologize - by definition it is not done on purpose. In mitigation of this possible fault, I might point out that were a similiar piece of work as firmly rooted in liberal pluralist or social democratic values as this is in libertarian ones, nobody would even notice the need to explain any values held at all. Only because anarchism is impossible to conceal (for the anarchist model of organization is the most appropriate body of theory we could work with) has it been necessary to pin my heart on my sleeve - the lack of such a declaration would result in a severe case of academic or political culture shock. (For instance, My God! Is this fellow an ANARCHIST?)

It can't be helped if, after this introduction, the framework is later found to be unfamiliar to the extent of making the mind boggle. I don't think that it will, though: despite the prevailing ignorance of the details and strains of anarchism, I suspect that most people find the basic ideas both simple to understand and easy to apply. Anarchism is far less complicated than marxism or capitalism. This makes it even more surprising to me that organization theorists have paid so little attention in the past to any other model of organization than the essentially hierarchical one. The most obvious explanation of this phenomenon that I can think of is the result of the impossibility of a value-free and unbiased social science with which we began. The fact that such a model of organization has remained under-developed could well be due to the fact that most organization theorists, sociologists and other people who might have developed one have not been anarchists. We are so used to equating anarchy with chaos; and whenever anarchism is taken seriously, it poses immediate threats to the philosophical foundations and political legitimation of organized political parties, industry, institutions of all sorts, governments and so on - in short, it threatens most of the things on which the people who might have

been expected to develop a proper theory of organization depend on for their livelihood. The values and interests threatened are seldom questioned, and can be found incorporated into almost any organization theorist's work.

So the development of an anarchist perspective ought to be elevated from an incidental part of the work to a third level of relevance in addition to the two already discussed. We are concerned with developing a theoretical understanding of the way voluntary organizations and mutual-aid groups work in practice. It might seem a tall order to tackle ideological, theoretical and practical problems all at the same time, but in reality they are all part of the same problem. This is why they can be referred to as levels of relevance, and it isn't really possible to concentrate on just one of them and take the others for granted. It should be obvious why this cannot be done. The possibility of anarchism is a matter of contention, and the use of anarchist sources in mainstream social science is infrequent and therefore unfamiliar; the role of mutual-aid groups in the welfare state is problematic to say the least; and the theory of such groups is embryonic, piecemeal and undeveloped as a branch of organization theory. We couldn't really ignore any of them even if we wanted to. As a matter of fact, they do fit quite well together. There is no real reason why all three shouldn't be tackled together, and that is the course we shall take.

CHAPTER THREE

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ANARCHISM AS THEORY AND METHOD

The distinctiveness of Anarchism lies in the fact that the values implicit in the criticism of the state as coercive, authoritarian, and over-centralized are reflexively applied to anarchists' own theory and practice. It is worth looking at this in slightly more detail than simply asserting the fact, since an understanding of it is basic to an appreciation of the development of anarchist organization theory and its applications, which grew from precisely this reflexive application of first principles.

There can be said to be three parts to any philosophy of social change, whether it is a reformist, radical or a revolutionary one. The first element is a critique of and an analysis of the existing institutions, history, and economic and social arrangements of societies. The second part is some conception of what a 'better' society might look like, with the criteria for what is better usually implicit in the first part. Third, and last, there is some strategy for the attainment of this ideal condition; a technique of social change. It is this last component, the one most concerned with political practise, which is the best guide for distinguishing one theory from another. Different varieties of marxism, leninism, trotskyism, socialism, democracy, christianity, fascism and unionism have all used different strategies at different times, as has anarchism in its various manifestations; they all use different tools and different methods, or the same tools and methods in different ways. This isn't a treatise on comparative political philosophy so we shan't try to discuss all of the possibilities here - that

requires a book of its own. The only point we want to bring out is the way the third component of a political philosophy - the practical one - relates to the other two components.

For example, in so far as most marxists adhere in some fashion to the doctrine of the 'withering away of the state' as Marx himself developed it, their vision of the future comes remarkably close to the anarchist one of federated networks of autonomous groups; and there are similarities between these two visions and the laissez-faire minimalist reduction of the state to purely administrative and co-ordinative functions only.

At the same time as sharing this ultimate goal, however, most philosophies find it possible to hold that there are good and adequate reasons why the values used to judge the goal a desirable one should not also be used to decide what sort of means are appropriate to reaching that goal. The classic marxist doctrine sees the 'withering away of the state' as being preceded by a 'transitional period', during which the dictatorship of the proletariat will replace the state as it is now; a socialist state is thus the means of abolishing the institution itself. Modern-day laissez-faire capitalists seek to use the power of the state to enforce the reduction of planning in the economy, and the intervention of government in the free market. Anarchists don't believe such attempts as these - which seek to use the state as an instrument in its own diminution - are either possible or logical; Anarchists' own ends and means are consistent both with each other and with their critical analysis of society. It is this characteristic belief - that ends cannot be used to justify means - which has made it possible to identify an anarchist organization theory. And this same characteristic is the reason for the fact that the way anarchists have organized themselves remains the best historical example we have of how this theory of organization both is conceived and works in practice.

The logic behind this theory, and its links with the other component parts of the philosophy of Anarchism, can be seen most clearly in the Sonvillier circular of 1871. We observed that Marxists and Anarchists have similar goals. At one time, they both worked under the same umbrella in the First International, until Bakunin and Marx fell out. Marx removed the seat of the International to New York, but the Anarchists who remained (they still in fact exist, as the International - in Sweden, I believe) issued the Sonvillier circular to express their own view of how their own organization ought to work.

> "We regard it as perfectly natural that the school whose ideal is the conquest of political power by the working class should believe that the ..... organization ..... be transformed into a hierarchical organization guided and governed by an executive ..... We must nevertheless fight against them in the name of ..... 'Emancipation of the workers by the workers themselves' independently of all guiding authority ..... we demand that the general council ..... return to its normal function, which is to act as a statistical and information bureau ..... it must reject any principle which may tend towards authoritarianism and dictatorship."
> (quoted in 'Anarchism', George Woodcock, p.229)

It is apparent that the organization theory implicit in this circular is inseparable from the political struggle between the two opposing camps in the International. But the reasons why the best statements of the theory are full of political issues and struggles of the era which some may find irrelevant and sectarian is because, as we have observed already, the means, ends and

tactics of anarchism comprise a total philosophy which developed in the course of the historical problems anarchists faced. We shall see later that a course in anarchist history is also the best education in anarchist theory.

As well as showing the links between means and ends in anarchist thought, the Sonvillier circular shows quite clearly that any theory of non-authoritarian and non-hierarchical organizing, which we need to develop and use in the study of voluntary organizations, derives much of its coherence and force from its political anarchistic origins. For the vast majority of organizations, the theory (if any) which is used to structure the organization is a kind of extra ingredient tacked on the back of whatever else the organization is doing: this is especially true of most political parties, at least the major British ones. One need only look at the conflicts engendered when the Labour party tries to turn its own organization into an issue of principle to see the truth of this. But the theory of anarchist organizing wasn't a luxury of this sort which could be considered when convenient, shelved at other times, and taken out to be dusted down when efficiency, innovation, democracy or profits had to be improved, but was and remains an essential prerequisite if the basic values of anarchism were ever to be retained in practice. As a result, anarchist organization theories consist of the visualizations and partial realizations of co-operating and organizing in such a way as to promote autonomy and self-government amongst the membership, and avoid coercive authority and oligarchy.

The result isn't a prescriptive method. As Malatesta said, if anyone is looking for a rule book "it means we have failed in our attempt to explain what anarchism is all about" ('Anarchy',Malatesta, p.47). All we could possibly have is a set of principles, recommendations and warnings: and although these may look vague and fuzzy at the edges when compared to textbooks or training manuals, this is not the sort of criticism which can be remedied. Even so, purists might well accuse me of

oversimplifying issues and distorting sources. Before going into detail on the evolution of anarchist ideas, it must be pointed out that this last objection has some substance to it.

ANARCHISM AND ORGANIZATIONAL FORM

What I've done is to take elements from anarchist thinkers and writings of the last century and a half, and welded them into a coherent and continuous framework for my own (disreputably academic) purposes. I don't intend to go into the diversity or ramifications of different varieties of anarchist thought: I'm blithely disregarding the fact that my sources are a mixture of mutualist, collectivist, syndicalist, anarcho-communist, pacifist, feminist and so on: I apologize to anyone who knows enough to find this irritating, or who may subsequently discover that the ingredients are not homogeneous but merely homogenized. The justification is that our concern is with the theory of voluntary organization and mutual aid from a sociological, not a historical or biological perspective, and most certainly not with the theory of insurrection, revolution or revolutionary organizing, political philosophy, social criticism or polemics. There is no reason why such an undertaking should be thought either dishonest or invalid, distasteful though it may seem to some whose interests lie elsewhere.

At the same time, it cannot claim to be definitive either: all it represents is an attempt to come to terms with theoretical problems in the study of voluntary organization. Consider the following statement -

> "Human beings ..... will spontaneously associate themselves into groups for mutual aid, will voluntarily organize an economy which ensures the satisfaction of their needs. This is the principle of mutual aid ..... Apply this principle to the existing state of

> society ..... by taking the voluntary organizations which already exist ..... trade unions, syndicates, professional unions, academies etc. ..... We come to the conclusion that there are no essential functions which could not be transferred."
> (Herbert Read, 'Anarchy and Order',p.132)

There is no indication that any attempt has been made to think about the blanket term 'voluntary organization' along the lines we have been doing here. We quoted George Lakey earlier when he observed that Trade Unions were hardly libertarian. Of Read's other examples, professional unions include the B.M.A., the Law Society and other grouping not noted for their contribution to social change. The habit of taking structures of mutual aid for granted had an illustrious exponent in Kropotkin, that prince among Anarchists. In his book entitled 'Mutual Aid', he aggregates consumer co-operatives, lifeboat services, cyclists, gymnasts and religious charities and then states quite baldly that they are all shining example of mutual aid at work, along with wolves, ants and bees. Now we all owe a lot to Kropotkin, and whilst it is true that he wasn't concerned with organization theory as much as with countering social darwinist ideas, he did take mutual aid as being a fundamental - and therefore irreducible - tendency. Whether or not it happens to be true that there is a basic tendency towards mutual aid, it does not mean that there is no need to look at the way it works in detail. Other human drives, such as the sexual ones, have had encyclopaedias written on them. And if there isn't a mutual aid drive in any real sense, then the need to look further is even greater. Attempts are long overdue.

Perhaps one reason why anarchists have not developed this is because the very attempt requires a degree of detachment which (though it is the rule in academic establishments) seems to be impossible for activists. A theoretical study of any

organization's form must involve relating the sort of activities people do to why they do them. That this will involve both strategic and tactical considerations follows inevitably. Look at a trade union, for example, in relation to union bureaucracy. The ideal of an anarchist union (such as the CNT, which was the major anarchist union in Spain before the civil war there) is decentralized, federal and has no need of much central bureaucracy. The more usual structure of social democratic unions is compartmentalized, centralized and bureaucratic. We have already noted the reason for the contrast: it is that anarchist values are reflexively applied. In this particular instance though, the fact that the Spanish CNT followed the tactic of direct action whilst the more usual tactic for a social democratic union is one of negotiation is strikingly relevant. For activists in any voluntary organization, the tactics and the strategy of the organization cannot be considered separately from the form. The two are intertwined. Concentration on the relationship is usually considered to be a symptom of political extremism in Britain, where relationships between forms and aims aren't widely appreciated as being important. On the other hand, any member of an anarchist organization would be bound to consider the question of form to be part of the whole question of strategy and aims, and would not in practice consider it separately. So nobody, whether in an anarchist or hierarchical organization, ever has the necessary detachment to look at form alone. Either it is seen as irrelevant, or part of a total picture. In a little while, we'll look at the history of the CNT in more detail, from an organizational point of view. We shan't be concerned with whether syndicalism is the road to revolution or not, or if the general strike is the best weapon for workers to use. But we shall be concerned with the way each of these aims, or any other aim, relates to the form and structure of the organization which seeks to achieve them. This type of reasoning is a luxury which an active member of a group would not usually indulge in - certainly nobody did before the late 1960's, when

consciousness-raising began to make an impact in womens' groups and started a spread of similar techniques.

To continue this digression further: McLuhan has popularized the notion of 'the medium is the message'. Though it may seem that a case is being made out here for saying that the medium - the form - is all, this is not strictly speaking the case. In the theoretical context we are operating in, it makes perfect sense to say that the organizational medium, the form, affects the tasks of an organization profoundly. It is because this relationship is so important that it is imperative to understand how it works, and the least understood part of it is the notion of form. In a very real sense, it is the form which determines the content in a voluntary organization. This is an insight we owe to modern structuralists. Its political extension is that if only we get the structure right, then the content will look after itself. The central question of politics becomes not what we are doing, but how we are doing it: by doing things in a different way we are bound to achieve different results, and it is at least as important to attach blame to the structure we work through as to attach it to our policies when things go wrong. There is a balance in this, as in all things, and when we concentrate on form here it is to redress that balance rather than to create a new one.

PROUDHON AND THE GENESIS OF ANARCHIST ORGANIZATION THEORY

Let us return now to an anarchist theory of organization. It cannot claim to be definitive in any way, and our sources would, were they alive, most certainly be unhappy to be used in such a way as to present a system which would stand forever.

> "I have no system, I will have none, and I expressly repudiate the suggestion. The system of humanity, whatever it be, will only be known when humanity is at an end ..... My

> business is to find out where humanity is going, and to prepare for it."
> (Proudhon, quoted in M.Buber 'Paths in Utopia', p.24)

George Woodcock aptly called Proudhon a man of paradox, and despite what he wrote above, he certainly wasn't averse to a little bit of system building himself. But even at his most systematic, he would still have agreed that he was developing only one possible theory about the way some sections of humanity are going. It is to the main set of Proudhon's ideas that we turn first. It has been said that Proudhon's thought rests on the two pillars of mutualism and federalism, and those are indeed the foundation of anarchist organization theory also. We'll look briefly at each of them.

Mutualism isn't so much a theory as a vision and an ideal - the ideal of mutual aid and co-operation as the social glue which binds people together. This is an idea which (it has been said) Proudhon may well have developed from Condorcet, and the notion of small scale groups replicated thousands of times in a whole society owes much to Robert Owen and Fourier too. Both the latter saw the small size of their ideal communities as being one of their essential features. It was Proudhon, though, who brought the mutualist idea of free association with the emphasis on groups into anarchism. Up to 1851, when Proudhon published his 'General Idea of Revolution', nobody had developed the ideas of the abolition of the state and the evils of authoritarianism in conjunction with the possibilities of small groups as the basis of a new society. Previous anarchists such as Godwin and Stirner were individualists in the tradition of Leibnitz, and saw groups as individuals coming together, without creating anything more than the sum of their parts. Those who had influenced the formation of small groups along Owenite or Phalangist lines were not committed to the abolition of the state, and lacked much

awareness of what could be different in their groups apart from the size and the newness. Proudhon was the first to properly combine the two -

> "The importance of their (associations') work lies, not in their petty union interests, but in their denial of the rule of capitalists, usurers and governments."
> (quoted in 'Proudhon: Life and Work', George Woodcock, p.170)

If mutualism is the glue which binds individuals into groups, it is federalism which binds groups together into an organization or a society. Proudhon's type of federalism wasn't anything like that expounded by the Americans such as Jefferson. It most certainly wasn't a theory as to how a state ought to be constructed, but was concerned instead with what the state would be replaced by. The development of federalism as a substitute for the state was once again a Proudhonian innovation. He wrote -

> "Divide everything which can be divided, define everything which can be defined, allocate among different organs everything which has been so divided: leave nothing undivided."
> (Proudhon, 'Principles of Federation', p.49)

He called this the principle of organic separation, and combined it with the formation of small sovereign groups, and a third principle which clearly set out the relation between the groups and the federation into "the whole science of constitutions."(ibid.)

Mutualism without federalism doesn't solve the problem of state power and its abuse. Federalism without mutualism doesn't solve the problem of how coercive authority can be replaced with

co-operation. But when combined, the two dovetail together beautifully to form a genuine and practicable alternative to any existing state: and on a more limited interpretation, an alternative to large hierarchical organization. Such hierarchies could be replaced with federations of mutual-aid groups to form anarchist organizations capable of operating complex and sophisticated tasks. Malatesta has put this into words better than anyone else.

> "An anarchist organization must ..... allow for complete autonomy and independence, and therefore full responsibility to individuals and groups; free agreement between those who think it useful to come together for co-operative action, for common aims; a moral duty to fulfil one's pledges and to take no action which is contrary to the accepted programme. On such bases one then introduces practical forms and the suitable instruments to give real life to the organization. Thus the groups, the federation of groups, the federation of federations, meetings, correspondence committees and so on. But this must be done freely, in such a way as not to restrict the thoughts and initiative of individual members, but only to give greater scope to the efforts which in isolation would be impossible or ineffective ..... Congresses ... are free from authoritarianism in any shape or form because they do not legislate and do not impose their deliberations on others. They serve to maintain and increase personal contacts amongst the most active members ..... and their decisions are not binding but simply suggestions, advice and

> proposals to submit to all concerned, and they do not become binding and executive except for those who accept them, and for as long as they accept them. The administrative organs they nominate have no directive powers, and do not take initiatives except for those who specifically solicit and approve of them."
> (From 'Life and Ideas', op. cit. p.87)

DEFICIENCIES IN THE THEORY

At the same time as noting how concise and logical this is, it is not difficult to appreciate that taken by itself, this description raises more questions than it answers for anybody interested in how an organization really works. The statement of anarchist principles, of the mutualist and federalist currents converging into the organizations of a new society are clear enough. But apart from one stipulation, the description is lacking in detail. That stipulation though, that a federation exists only by the will of its members and only in order that they may act in concert when acting alone is not feasible, is important itself. However hard we look, no statement or suggestion of how this is to be achieved appears anywhere. Anarchists usually hide behind the twin assertions that in the first place, people have to work this out for themselves: and in the second place, once the state is abolished and everyone is free to act, the natural tendency of human beings will be to form federations and groups on the correct lines out of instinct and innate political canniness. Whether or not these assertions are correct doesn't alter the fact that there exists an enormous credibility gap between the sometimes utopian vision of a stateless world, and the inability of many people to see precisely how they can exist without government, even when they are assured that it is indeed possible. (And I have seen enough tension, anger and cussedness in mutual-aid groups to make me

believe that if there is an instinct, it is deeply buried - to start a mutual-aid group from scratch needs either training, advice or experience. Instinct is not enough.) This deficiency is most apparent in the mutualist pillar: not only is the federalist pillar far more articulately set out (in documents such as the Sonvillier circular), but federations of all sorts are far more visible as evidence than are basic mutual aid groups. This deficiency is also apparent in the classical anarchist writers. Kropotkin was and is highly susceptible to charges of naivety, and to putting too much of his faith in optimism. Bakunin's organizational plans - he had a fatal weakness for secret societies and conspiracies - drifted so far from anarchist ones that they were (embarassingly) taken over as a blueprint by the Bolsheviks in pre-revolutionary Russia. And, in a masterly analysis of Proudhon's thought, Martin Buber says:

> "We find here no adequate answer to the question ..... 'how must the units be constituted so that they can federate into a genuine popular order, a new and just social structure'. Thus Proudhon's socialism lacks one essential.".
> (from 'Paths in Utopia', p.37)

Going back to Malatesta, perhaps the most realistic and honest of the great anarchist pioneers, we can find some references which point the way to an explanation of the lack of detail in the mutualist idea. For example, in relation to leadership in anarchist organizations, he says:

> "If it is true that organization creates leaders; if it is true that anarchists are unable to come together without submitting to an authority, this means that they are not yet very good anarchists, and before thinking of

> establishing anarchy in the world, they must first think of making themselves live anarchistically. The remedy does not lie in the abolition of organization, but in the growing consciousness of each individual member ..... The origin and justification for authority lies in social disorganization."
> (ibid, p.86)

And when describing the major step in becoming committed to anarchist principles, he writes that a person

> "must begin to feel the solidarity that joins him to his comrades, and to learn to co-operate with others in defence of common interests, and that (they) could manage ..... by their own efforts. And when he has understood this, he is an anarchist even if he does not call himself such."
> (ibid, p.90)

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ANARCHIST IDEAS

Malatesta wrote the above in 1897, and the previous quotation in the same year. Proudhon had written 'Du Principe Federatif' in 1863, Bakunin was dead by 1876, and Kropotkin published 'Mutual Aid' in 1902. The social sciences were in their infancy, and social psychology virtually non-existent. The issues of group identity and interpersonal dynamics which Malatesta begins to discuss in the passages we just quoted weren't taken seriously by social scientists until the second world war. In this light, the fact that the nineteenth-century anarchists saw no need to say much on the mechanics of mutualistic groups is no more simplistic than, say, the assumptions of Taylor and the Scientific Management movement a few years later. It is only since the

revival of interest in anarchism from the 1960's on that the concepts and tools to plug the holes in mutualist theory have been available to the right people at the right time and that the theory needed has been developed at all. Malatesta could put a finger on part of the problem without appreciating its dimensions fully.

There is another factor, also to do with the history of ideas, which partially accounts for the deficiences in Mutualist theory, and this most clearly emerges in the writings of Kropotkin. Echoes of it can be found in most libertarian thinkers who believed with him that mutual aid was an instinctive tendency in all forms of life. Kropotkin thought that

> "Anarchism owes its origin to the constructive, creative activity of the people, by which the institutions of communal life were developed in the past, and to a protest - a revolt against the force which had thrust itself on those institutions".
> (from Kropotkin's 'Modern Science and Anarchism', rep. in 'The Essential Kropotkin', ed. Capouya and Tompkins, p.58)

He also wrote at some length on the medieval city, which he saw as being in many ways the nearest historical manifestation of a non-statist social system, and saw the basic unit of a future mutualist and anarchist society in his early work as the 'obschiny' or rural commune. This was able to draw on the vast potential for mutual aid which ordinary people possessed. Even in later life, the urban communes he envisaged were simply transplants of this concept to city life. He tells how in a revolution, the people would "take possession of all the wealth accumulated by past generations in the name of the whole community". But he had no analysis of what form the 'obschiny' would take in the real world, because he didn't really need one.

Like Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Malatesta, Kropotkin was born in an essentially pre-industrial society, and lived during the process of industrialization and urbanization in Europe. The concept of community, of neighbourliness, and of the self-contained and self-sufficient commune didn't need to be spelt out because everyone, it would seem with hindsight, knew all about it at first hand. The problem wasn't to describe it to those who knew perfectly well what he was talking about, but to elevate mutual aid into the new basic unit of a future society and show how this could be done. It was much easier to say that a wrong turning was being taken when the audience was still within sight of the missed signpost and could still, maybe, see a little way down the other road.

Probably Kropotkin had underestimated the extent to which industrialization had changed the centuries-old pattern of life in Europe. It seems quite certain that none of the classical anarchists had really appreciated the extent to which the basis of folk-culture mutualism, with which they were planning to erect a new order, had been fatally undermined in both its content and transmission mechanisms by technology, new occupational patterns, increased mobility, universal schooling, and the whole generalized impact of the industrial revolution. Again in retrospect, the hole in mutualist theory could have been plugged (perhaps) with an analysis of what a community was, what made people feel mutually inclined, and how and why those qualities were disappearing. Giddens has pointed out that most classical sociology, including the work of Marx, Weber and Durkheim, can be seen as an attempt to come to terms with the industrial revolution and its impact on European society. Anarchism in the same period can be seen in the same way. (A discussion of the way social scientists have tried to define the essence of 'community', and whether these ideas can be incorporated into anarchist ideas will have to be postponed till later).

At this stage, it is sufficient for us to have identified the gap in the classic conception of mutualism, and to see that we must try and develop an anarchist theory of mutual aid organizations to fill it. The theory of community will have a part in this. The nostalgia for a lost past of which anarchists are often accused is a response to the part community plays in anarchism - nostalgia appears to be an important motivating force in such work. Both planners and dwellers in high-rise tower blocks have been known to idealize back-to-back slum dwelling for precisely this reason. It is far easier to bemoan the loss of a quality which is visible through retrospectacles than it is to look for the reason why it got lost in the first place, and its absence in the present.

TRANSITION TO THE NEXT CHAPTER - SPAIN

Our next staging post will be Spain - no anarchist work is complete without it. To put this in the context of our discussion here, the appeal of anarcho-syndicalism (the making of a revolution through trade union activity) both as a tactic and a theoretical short-cut lies in the fact that mutual theory is less important for unions, in that the mutualist base clearly arises from the fact that all members are workers.

Combine this with the historical background of industrialization in Europe we discussed above, and the reasons why the lack of theory inhibited the growth of anarchism less in Spain than elsewhere in Europe begins to be more explicable. Spain was less industrialized than the rest of Europe, so the type of rural mutualism which was supposedly practised in Kropotkin's rural communities may well have survived longer there. Combined with the syndicalist nature of Spanish anarchism, the gaps in Proudhonian mutualism do not threaten the edifice with collapse. Both in the rural communities of Andalusia and in the new working class in Catalonia (the two main centres of the

movement), the basic units of mutualist groups could develop in the absence of an adequate understanding of its theoretical base because the intuitive understanding assumed by the early anarchists was that much more real. This certainly isn't supposed to be a full explanation of the fact that it is only by looking at the Spanish case can we begin to see the development of large scale federal groupings which really worked. But it does provide us with some background before we take a look at the history of anarchism in Spain. We shan't really help develop the mutualist part of the theory but we will be able to see some ways in which the federal and conceptual parts worked in a practical context - a context in some ways far removed from voluntary organizations of today, but one which in other ways has a lot we can learn from. Additionally, for those who are relatively unused to the train of thought we have begun to explore here, some exposure to the history of what remains an essential part of anarchist history will be a useful piece of acclimatization in unfamiliar terrain. The problems remain to be sorted out regarding the ways in which we can understand how people combine into mutual aid groups, though we will be in a better position to answer the questions this involves when we have first seen the flowering of anarchism in its fullest setting.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW ANARCHISM CAME TO SPAIN

In spite of the fact that he was the first person to fully articulate the twin principles of mutualism and federalism, Proudhon wasn't a great organizer himself. He viewed the basis of mutual-aid groups not in organizational terms, but as networks of individual contracts, mutually binding in themselves and needing nothing more than good will to keep them all working. The lack of any emphasis on group dynamics meant that when his ideas were translated into Spanish by Pi y Margall in the 1860's, they gave rise to little in the way of organizational activity. Despite Proudhon's own condemnation of parliamentarianism and disillusionment with politics after he was elected to the French Assembly in 1849, Pi y Margall adopted a parliamentary strategy to put his federalist ideas into practise. While he met with the ultimate in political success when he eventually became President of Spain - elected - during an interregnum in 1873, Pi isn't remembered today as one of the great political figures of the nineteenth century. No lasting results ever came from the political success, the presidency of Pi, the first and only democratically elected anarchist (of sorts) head of state, who is relegated to one of history's footnotes. Perhaps the most lasting legacy of Pi was the fact that Proudhonian influences in Spain so quickly gave way to more revolutionary strategies being developed by Bakunin.

In contrast to Proudhon, Bakunin was fascinated by organizational strategies - we have mentioned his especial fascination by wide-ranging plots of an international and subversive nature, which would infiltrate existing workers organizations and convert them to anarchist ideas. The popular

conception of anarchist organization owes more to Bakunin than to anyone else, especially as dramatised by writers such as Conrad ('The Secret Agent) and Chesterton ('The Man who was Thursday'). Bakunin's most successful variation on this theme was the International Alliance of Social Democracy - how little names change in even a century. It had seven articles in its programme : it was atheistic: it stood for sexual equality: for common ownership of the means of production: for the rights of children to a full and free education in science, industry and the arts: for the replacement of states by free federations: it was against patriotism: and believed in the universal association of local associations through freedom. Unlike the International Brotherhood, which was its Bakuninist predecessor, or the World Revolutionary Alliance, which was its phantom successor, the Social Democratic Alliance actually made An Impact. Bakunin's plan was for autonomous sections to develop all over Europe, and to further that end he sent one Giuseppe Fanelli to Spain in 1969. Fanelli was Italian and spoke not a word of Spanish, but his visit had an immediate and lasting impact on Spanish Anarchism, which dates its existence as an organised movement from his visit, graphically described, in an oft quoted passage, by Anselmo Lorenzo, a member of the audience - "Cosa Orrible! Spa entosa!" (see e.g. Brenan 'The Spanish Labyrinth', p.139)

PHASE ONE: THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

In fact Fanelli, though he must have been an orator of considerable ability, appears to have been Bakunin's emissary by virtue of his possession of a free railway pass, and either misunderstood or ignored the more conspiratorial parts of Bakunin's programme. Though the Alliance was actually meant to be a secret elite, controlling and directing unsuspecting members of front groups which Fanelli was really supposed to set up, he went and set up a section of the Alliance instead. It managed quite well through over fifty years of evolutionary change with no

direction or control at all. Which goes to prove something, I think. The Alliance set up its first Congress in Barcelona in 1870, and the supposedly top secret documents Fanelli left behind him were the basis of its resolutions, which in their turn set the pattern for all subsequent incarnations.

> "1. In every locality, workers of each trade will be organized in special sections.
> 2. All sections of trades from the same locality will federate (for) matters of mutual aid, education etc.
> 3. Sections of the same trade belonging to different localities will federate.
> 4. Local Federations will federate to constitute the Spanish Regional Federation, which will be represented by a federal council.
> 5. All ..... federations, as well as the regional federations, will govern themselves.
> 6. All workers ..... will decide themselves, through the intermediary of their delegates, as to the method of action and development of the organization."
> (quoted in G.Leval 'Collectives in the Spanish Revolution' p.20)

By the 1872 Cordoba congress of the Alliance in Spain, the functions of the Regional Committee had (as specified in the Sonvillier Circular) been defined solely as a correspondence and statistical bureau. At that same congress, the Alliance confirmed the anti-parliamentarian stance of non-involvement in all established political institutions. The issue arose in connection with Pi y Margall's federalists: the congress "refused to give general support to the federalist movement, but raised no objection to local groups or individual members

co-operating."(Quoted by Horowitz in 'The Anarchists', p.370)

The flexibility and general outlines of subsequent Spanish Anarchism find their first distinctive expressions here. Brenan comments that from the Cordoba Congress emerged the characteristic -

> "that all movement ..... which develops in it comes from below. What happens is this: at some critical moment, let us say, a congress of Spanish federations is called to consider the possibility of revolutionary action. The delegates of each district will arrive at the assembly with a full knowledge of the wishes and capacities of the workmen they represent. Each will get up and say what the men of his province and district are able and prepared to do. No district will be urged to take any action for which it does not feel itself morally and materially prepared ..... no group has ever been overruled by another group or had pressure put on it to act against its private convictions ..... Spanish anarchists have insisted on basing their movement on the free and unfettered impulse of their adherents, organized in local groups, and have not allowed themselves to become enmeshed in the deadening and life-destroying net of a party bureaucracy."
> (Brenan, op.cit. p.146)

This may well sound like an idealized version of decision-making, but there is no doubt that it worked successfully over a long period of time.

There are many other characteristics of the organization emerging at this time which are well worth noting, and find their first expression in the activities of the Alliance. The planned federations of 'sections of the same trade from different localities', or national single-trade unions as we know them in Britain today, never emerged. The area organizations for all types of workers became the sole functioning part of the organizational communication net. Later on, single-trade unions on a national basis were seen as being intrinsically counter-revolutionary and divisive, and were positively discouraged. Of greater significance, and worth considering in some detail, are the relationship which had begun to be assumed - firstly between the organization and the activists, secondly between both of these and the non-active membership, and lastly, how all these three interrelate and work to various intermediate goals.

Obviously, the goal of the Spanish Anarchists was the fomenting of a revolution which would abolish the State. Equally obviously, these goals are not necessarily ones which are going to be held by any group adopting the same organizational structure. The question which may, and probably will, be asked is this: what is the point (for any non-anarchist individuals or groups) in looking at the history of an organization like the Alliance or the C.N.T. when its goals are so radically different from any which are held by the majority of people involved in voluntary organizations. However, part of the argument we've been putting forward is that a typology based on goals is not necessarily the most useful way to categorize an organization, and doesn't necessarily shed any light on how it works. The point of taking the Spanish anarchists seriously, as an example, is because of the light it sheds on problems faced by any organization having the same form, but with different objectives: not having similar goals is not a valid criterion for assuming a completely different structure.

PROBLEMS IN THE ALLIANCE

The problem with which we shall be concerning ourselves is not what the goals of an organization may be, but what the relationship is between the mutualist composition, the commitment of the members to the goal, and relationships with the wider society. We've already noted that some of Bakunin's conspiratorial theories were incorporated into Bolshevism: and that Fanelli mistakenly set up the first anarchist groups in Spain with the supposedly secret articles of the International Alliance of Social Democracy. The first problems the new organization encountered were caused by the influence of the Bakuninist conspiratorial model which had, via Fanelli, been incorporated into the organization. The Barcelona labour unions, which affiliated to the First International via their membership of the Alliance, were the first recruitment and power base of spanish anarchism. However, "there remained a kind of shadowy organization of leading militants which, though it had no official existence, virtually controlled the policy."(Woodcock, op.cit p.341). This is not an unfamiliar situation in any organization. The people in the Alliance in this position were of course Bakuninists, who adopted a manipulative, elitist, and paternalistic role within the Alliance. Whilst since the Russian Revolution the perils of such a course have been an article of faith amongst libertarians, at that time there appeared nothing really unacceptable about such a way of organizing.

The paradox involved, which makes the whole structure unsound, was not appreciated at the time. With hindsight, we can see that mutualism and federalism should complement each other in an anarchist organization. In the Spanish case, however, the anarchists who started the movement incorporated the craft unions of Barcelona into their organization, which were not only non-anarchist groups, and were not organized on anarchist lines, but were also not committed to anything apart from the welfare of

their membership construed in the narrowest material sense. Instead of the two parts of the Alliance(the existing craft unions and the Fanelli-inspired anarchists) forming a unified whole, all the craft unions wanted to do was to win specific victories for one part of the working class only. The anarchists cast themselves in the role of educators now, later to be a vanguard: but they increasingly found that their conception of the organization as a staging post to a revolution was at odds with the reformist demands of the craft unions for material gains now. Bakunin assumed that the workers would want to fit neatly into his vision: predictably enough, they turned out not to.

The enduring discovery made in the earliest days was that for a federation to succeed, the constituent mutual-aid groups must agree on what the federation is for. The anarchists, in their first enthusiastic attempt at revolutionary organizing, came to see their union confederates as being at the best irrelevant, at the worst counter-productive, and in any case only there to be used. One of the audience at Fanelli's first historic talk was Anselmo Lorenzo, one of the most prominent and active of the early pioneers of the movement. Later on in his life, he remarked:

> "How much better it would have been if, instead of manipulating agreements and solutions, the Alliance had undertaken the task of education and teaching that would have led to agreements and solutions based on free and reasoned discussion."
> (quoted in Peirats 'Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution', p.239)

It was this same Lorenzo who resolved to leave Spain and undertake teaching and education elsewhere. He went on an 'apostolic journey' through Andalusia, in the hills of southern Spain, where 'the idea', as anarchism became known, quickly took

root amongst the peasants and landless labourers of the hills. The Alliance was in fact suppressed in 1874, as a general wave of repression swept Europe, but by the time it re-emerged in 1881 (under the new name of 'The Federation of Workers of the Spanish Region') Andalusia had overtaken the Catalonian anarchists as the largest contingent. The problems built in to the old Bakuninist form of organization came to the fore in an aggravated and divisive fashion as a result of this new development.

PHASE TWO: PROBLEMS IN THE FEDERATION

The Barcelona unions wanted (as has been said) immediate gains for their members: the anarchist activists had come round to the idea of slower, non-parliamentary, educational work preparing for revolution: and the Andalusians wanted to put the ideas of Anarchism into practise immediately without waiting for any preparatory or educational work. With this threefold, mutually contradictory idea of what the organization was all about, it could clearly not survive for very long in that form.

During the 1880's there also crystallised a theoretical shift in anarchist thought. Whereas Bakunin had seen the building of workers' organizations as the main task of anarchists, his ideas began to be replaced as the main inspiration of Spanish Anarchist thought, and Kropotkinian ideas - if we can call them such - began to predominate. The slogan of Bakuninist collectivism was 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his work': and it was on this basis that the Barcelona craft unions joined first the Alliance, and subsequently the Federation. This conception of the workers as both the people who would build the revolution and also benefit from it was characteristic of Bakunin's ideas. This conception of social justice was giving way to anarchist communism (as Kropotkin called it - he was the inspiration). The quite different slogan of the anarcho-communists was not 'to each according to his work' but 'to each according to his needs'. The

analysis of the economic evils of society had been broadened to cover not simply the inequitable division of fruits of labour and control over the means of production, distribution and exchange, but now included the wage system itself and the whole concept of renumeration for labour. The basis of Kropotkin's ideal society, the commune, would share out wealth on the basis of need, not on the basis of work put in directly on the production of wealth.

As Kropotkin himself wrote,

> "Even Collectivists suspect that a man of forty, the father of three children, has greater needs than a youth of twenty. They suspect that a woman who is suckling her child and spends sleepless nights by its cot cannot get through the same amount of work as a man who enjoys tranquil slumber ..... is (the wage system) to be the outcome of the revolution? ..... It cannot be so. For on the day when the ancient institutions splinter into fragments before the axe of the proletariat, voices will be heard shouting: Bread for all! Lodging for all! Rights for all to the comforts of life!" (From 'The Wage System' in Capouya and Tompkins, op.cit. p.105-7)

We've observed the reflexive way that anarchists tend to apply their ideas: the application of this principle here is clear. If it is in fact not just the workers who will form the basis of a new economic order, then it cannot be on the basis of exclusive worker organizations that the Revolution can be built. Anarchists therefore should not organize in the type of union which derives its solidarity from the fact that all the members are also workers, but should instead form groups based on the fact that all the members are dedicated to the same idea. Clearly, if workers are the basis of the existing economic order then it

follows that they will have a special role to play, on that basis, in its overthrow, but this is certainly not an entitlement to have the only say in determining what shall come after.

When Kropotkin's ideas were translated into Spanish in the 1880's, they were to have a crucial role in forming the mould from which the organizations of the Spanish anarchists were to be cast. The refusal of the craft unions to become involved in anything except campaigns for immediate gains had resulted in the parallel reluctance of the activists in Catalonia to do anything except propoganda and educational work amongst the unions. This led to the breakaway of part of the Andalusian section of the Federation, who were obviously left out, and they formed a group called 'Los Desherados' (The Dispossessed) dedicated to immediate and direct action, usually violent. The split occured at the Seville congress of 1882, and the following year the Federation denounced the activities of the breakaways. By this time, the supposed Black Hand conspiracy, to murder the entire landowning population of Andalusia, was being used as an excuse to persecute the movement throughout Spain, which no doubt accounts for the rapid dissociation of the direct action proponents. But despite the opinion of a sociologist called in by the Government to the effect that the Black Hand never existed, the repression continued. During the years of relative idleness this imposed, there was a total reappraisal of the ideas and tactics of the Federation.

It was at last realized that the groups comprising the Federation were failing to give each other any support, were failing to federate successfully, were not trying to cope with differences of background and propensities to various tactics, and that there was a serious gap between the conception of the parties involved as to what the Federation as a whole ought to be doing. The Catalonian anarchists and the craft unions had proved to be so highly successful at industrial action that many non-anarchists, republicans, carlists and catholic workers were joining: the anarchists in Catalonia were tired of the reformism

and material aspirations of the unions, and were failing in their attempt to make unionism more of an anarchist activity.

PHASE THREE

At Valencia in 1888, Kropotkin's brand of anarchist communism was effectively adopted. The Federation was, for all practical purposes, abandoned, to be replaced by a two-tier organization united in the 'Pact for Union and Solidarity'. This comprised the unions of Catalonia on the one hand, and the 'Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region' on the other. Many people belonged to both and were active in both: the dual structure of two parallel organizations, one industrial and the other political, persisted in one way or another for the next fifty years. The lasting contribution made to anarchist theory at this time was developed by the Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region, a shadowy body remarkable for the looseness of its organizational ties, consisting almost entirely of 'grupos de afinidad': affinity groups. The affinity group not only proved successful then, but recently has been popularized for a new generation of activists in the Peace and Anti-nuclear movements, who have rediscovered and redeveloped the same organizational structures as the Spanish Anarchists did nearly a century ago.

It was implicit in the new anarcho-communism that the prime areas of activity should be the education of people everywhere, the spreading of the idea of society organized on the basis of free federations of groups dedicated to libertarian communism. Affinity groups were small groups of people united in their own commitment to this ideal, who would propagandize it to their best endeavours. There were two basic forms that this propaganda could take: propaganda by word, and propaganda by deed. In either case, the responsibility for deciding what should be done lay with each individual group. Affinity groups were the nearest the Spanish Anarchists ever came to solving the problems left by the hole in mutualist theory. They had learnt that to try and weld

pre-existing and disparate groups into one unified movement would not result in that movement being what either they, or any other of the constituent parts, would wish. The lesson learned was that if they wanted to achieve anything, it would have to be done from within the organization they set up themselves. Their activity henceforth was to be activity of groups, acting autonomously, but united about common principles and about their inter-relationships. These affinity groups were, on average, only around a dozen people each. They were the organic base of the anarchist movement for the next half-century.

Nevertheless, the solution developed to the problems inherent in the old Federation created new problems in its turn. The abolition of large scale structures led to the isolation of anarchists from each other and from the non-anarchist industrial workers also. Even if organizing workers industrially wasn't the be all and end all of anarchism any longer, the fact remained that without them, progress couldn't help being slow. Additionally, there seemed no opportunity to do anything about the enforced isolation because if all activity was to be at a group level, there was no real basis for a federation. We must remember that anarchists saw no point in federation for its own sake, but only when there was a functional purpose to it. This purpose appeared to be lacking. It is probably difficult now for anyone to know what it was like to be in the forefront of a new movement with neither the help of past history, the dead weight of past theory, or the analyses of political theorists with higher education to draw on: but the intellectual climate of radical politics before the Russian Revolution was probably so incomparably different to anything known today, and Spain was probably as isolated from mainstream European thought then as it has been throughout much of its history.

Individual groups began to do as they wished even when their activities adversely affected all other groups too: some of them took propaganda by deed as far as terrorism, resulting only in mass repression. The supposed educational value of bombings never

materialized - indeed, it seldom does - but there was no way of dissuading groups from adopting this type of action out of frustration and desperation. Whilst there is no doubt that the mutualist element of the organization was theoretically sound enough, the crisis that had been created in the federalist part of the theory made the development of affinity groups fruitless. A pyrrhic victory had been achieved. The nub of the problem was how to build an organization involving large numbers of people on the basis of affinity groups, without that large organization threatening the autonomy and individual commitment engendered by such a method of organizing. The only terms acceptable were those which retained the individual responsibility of each group for its own actions, and at the same time enabled those actions to work co-operatively towards anarchist, and not terrorist or reformist, ends.

As early as 1871, Anselmo Lorenzo had advocated the idea of unions adopting the tactic of the General Strike. This was developed by french anarchists into the theory of revolutionary syndicalism. Inspired by the French example, the unions in Spain (in which anarchists were still involved) launched strikes in both rural and urban areas around the turn of the century. At this time, there was still no federation to weld the affinity groups together: strikes in Barcelona, Cadiz and Seville all took place in isolation and were easily suppressed. The need for a new federal structure had been apparent for some time, but as explained above, the basis for such a federation had been lacking. By this time though, those anarchists who had been involved in educational work in affinity groups were influential enough in the Catalonian unions to revive the tradition of federal co-operation, and formed a new umbrella called 'Solidaridad Obrera', which was to plan coordinated activity by all groups. This was the body which organized the so-called 'tragic week' in Barcelona in 1910. The events following, culminating in the execution of the educationalist and schoolteacher Francisco Ferrer, led to waves of protest throughout Europe. But in Spain

they generated such enthusiasm that they led directly to the founding in October 1910 of the C.N.T. (Confederation Nacional de Trabajo). In so far as the problems involved in the mutualist/federalist congruence of ideas in a single organization were soluble, the structure of the movement which now emerged, based on the C.N.T., solved them.

THE C.N.T.

Though the C.N.T. was a union, it wasn't purely syndicalist: though it contained anarchists who influenced it and were committed to working within it, it was neither the type of front organization envisaged by Bakunin, nor the kind of infiltrated body modern Trotskyist entryists try to work towards. The lessons learnt in the days of the First International on the global scale, and by the original Spanish Alliance and the first Federation had not been forgotten. Malatesta had been warning of the dangers of pure syndicalism, and of the fantasy of the General Strike as the sole sufficient condition for the formation of a new society in the years prior to the formation of the C.N.T., and the spanish anarchists had their own history to reinforce the message. The C.N.T. was clear that its aim was to be 'comunismo libertario': in essence, libertarian communism on broadly Kropotkinian lines. They recognized (as the French syndicalists had failed to do) that trade union activity was a means, not an end in itself: the experiences of the federation in the 1880's were not forgotten. The basic aim was anarchism, not reformism, and it was on that basis that the new structure could begin to work.

The smallest and most local level of the new federation was the 'sindicato unico': the federation of all the workers in one factory or area, regardless of occupation. Separate craft unions no longer functioned: the potentially divisive split between skilled and unskilled workers, which would not exist in the communes of a future society, wasn't turned into the basis of the

new union. In this respect the C.N.T. was unique. The effect of not recognizing different classes among the members was to foster solidarity between all the workers of an area on a local basis, instead of promoting solidarity within sections of the workforce on a national basis. Local federations of workers were of course autonomous, and were federated into counties: counties federated into regions which formed the National committee on the classic anarchist pattern. The autonomy of each unit ensured that control never passed to the top of the pyramid, but always remained at the local level in which all members lived and worked. The National Committee of the C.N.T. was simply a correspondence and statistical bureau: all decisions were made at congresses - all through this organizational history of Spanish anarchism we've been quoting congresses as the place and time for decision making. It is remarkable that even as late as 1936, when the Civil War broke out, the C.N.T. had only one paid official, who was the national secretary. Though regional committees were free to pay their own secretaries, a wilderness of regional secretaries could never constitute a centralized hierarchy. Secretary in this context did really mean secretary.

Another interesting feature of the organization was that the entire national committee resided in one region designated by the annual congress. It always rotated, and there was no fixed place which was always at the physical centre of things. Unlike the old Catalan unions, but like the Andalusian groups, the C.N.T. never maintained any strike funds at all: so it had no need of a treasurer. Bureaucratic domination of the C.N.T. was impossible not merely because of the numerous devices which prevented the development of a bureaucracy, but also because the C.N.T. had dispensed with most of the traditional functions bureaucracies fulfil. Even the unpaid union officials had to be re-elected once each year. The federal structure of the C.N.T. as eventually developed by the Congress at Sans in 1918 is probably the high point of the practise of anarchist federalism to date.

It is notable also how the type of action the C.N.T. became involved in, and the way that the local groups made up the union, brought out most of the strong points of the structure. The people who founded the C.N.T. had learnt the hard way that the strength of a federation depends on the strength of the component groups, and that the strength of those groups must be reinforced by the activity binding them together. The C.N.T. therefore concentrated on direct action: there was no co-operation in industrial negotiation, which necessarily involves the development of a bureaucracy in a union as well as undercutting the need for and desirability of autonomous local groups. Strikes, boycotts and industrial sabotage were the day-to-day methods of operation. These necessitate, as a logical prerequisite to success, the existence of local groups to carry them out: and every action served to make local groups more cohesive.

> "Constant activity in common originated a maximum of interpersonal communication not only among the leaders but also between them and the rank-and-file, and among the members: this contributed very powerfully to the diffusion of the values of the C.N.T. subculture and strengthened its cohesion. Common efforts and sufferings - 'revolutionary gymnastics' - welded the group together as a whole."
> (J. Romero Maura, in 'Anarchism Today', ed. Apter and Joll, p.76-77)

In other words, it wasn't just the organizational structure which was responsible for the success of the CNT but also the way that its activities made use of the structure, and strengthened it, which was a crucial factor in its success. There is no reasonable doubt that the collectivization of industry and agriculture which took place in parts of Spain in the early days of the revolution

was a direct result of the success of CNT in not only diffusing anarchist ideas, but in giving people the opportunity to test those ideas out in what was admittedly a different context, but still a valuable one. At the same time, the CNT fostered local groups which were willing, able and experienced enough to act autonomously when the central government collapsed. The result was, if only for a little while, a society run by voluntary organization.

THE FAI

The role of the anarchist militants in the CNT was, to begin with, an entirely positive one. Working in affinity groups, they provided the CNT with inspiration, education and leadership. Their role as catalysts and educators was remarkable for its success. The looseness of their links in the forty years after the Valencia congress of 1888 had not prevented them from developing their ideas and had seen the development of the largest anarchist organization in the world. However, in 1926 a group of them met in exile in Lyons and decided that there was a need for a more structured federation of affinity groups in Spain : and at a congress held in Valencia in 1927, the Federacion Anarquista Iberica - known simply as the FAI - was created. The FAI became a revolutionary elite within the CNT. Before its formation, anarchists militants had worked within the CNT at local levels. Now, worried by reformism, they constituted a seperate faction dedicated to fighting 'deviationist heresies'. The best example of this was the expulsion of Angelo Pestana and the 'trientistas' in 1931.

Pestana wished to establish a syndicalist force in politics simply to gain material benefits for workers rather than political revolution, which was precisely what the FAI was set up to counter. In the ensuing political struggle the FAI managed to obtain his dismissal as secretary of the CNT. When thirty of Pestana's colleagues (hence 'trientistas') signed a letter

protesting at the influence of the FAI within the organization, they too were expelled: the resulting breach wasn't formally healed until 1936. In retrospect, the formation of the FAI can be seen as a mistake, even if the premise is granted that during the 1920's the spirit of Kropotkin had departed from the CNT. Instead of constituting a watchdog within the organization ensuring that its history was not forgotten or ignored, they quickly became its political arm, providing authority and leadership through their own parallel structure which was not responsible to the CNT membership. There seems to be no reason why affinity groups could not have carried on working within the CNT rather than controlling it, which is in effect what they did. By the time the civil war began, the CNT-FAI was seen as one organization. The successes of the anarchists in the Spanish revolution, the initial defeat of the coup and the subsequent collectivization of large parts of the Spanish economy were largely spontaneous. Though FAI members certainly played a leading part, it was as individuals rather than as representatives, and the groundwork for the success had been laid long before the FAI was ever formed. The mistakes of the FAI were made alone. As it developed, it became less in tune with the old anarchist principles, and more prone to issuing orders and exerting its not inconsiderable authority. And in 1937 the FAI abolished affinity groups, saying that although -

> "the affinity group has been for more than fifty years the most effective organism for propoganda, for contacts and anarchist activity, with the new organization that is required of the FAI the organic role of the affinity group has been eliminated. It is the intention of the plenum that ..... they will not be able to participate organically in the FAI."
> (see Peirats, op.cit. p.245)

If it was true that the FAI was a mistake, it was because it failed to be an anarchist organization, not because it was one.

CONCLUSIONS

The history here hasn't tried to be a political or social account of the Anarchist movement in Spain, but a small and skeletal beginning of an organizational history, tracing the developments of the ideas and forms of anarchism from the last chapter, and seeing how they were applied in practise in an anarchist organization. We've seen some of the problems faced by a mutualist-federalist movement, and seen how they were eventually resolved. Throughout, I've ignored political issues in favour of organizational issues, though their interrelation make the task difficult, and results in a version of events with an emphasis many may not recognize.

As a postscript, I ought to add a word about the collectives established by the graduates of the organizations we have been discussing after the outbreak of the civil war in 1936. They weren't, as noted above, established by the FAI or the CNT, or even exclusively by anarchists (though they were active and the Kropotkinian ethos pervades their work) but by ordinary Spanish workers and labourers who were confident enough to take the opportunity to manage their own economies. Possibly the best instance of this was in the agrarian collectivization of Aragon - a remarkable enterprise: it is interesting that Aragon should be best known in Britain not for this episode in its history, but for being where Henry VIII's first Catherine came from. The existing village structures were used as the basis for the creation of communes in which all property was held in common ownership. Smallholders were not forced to join in: the communes federated to form the Aragon Federation of Collectives. They attempted to abolish money (but found the attempt to be premature) and managed to run a planned but decentralized agricultural economy themselves with enormous and well-documented

success in all areas.

We saw earlier that in the urban industrial areas the workers in the CNT were organized on a factory basis. Perhaps as a result of this, the libertarian communism of the rural areas didn't find an exact parallel in citywide communes, and nothing as radical as the rural collectivization ever appeared in the towns. Instead, there sprang up worker self-management in most industries, in Barcelona especially. Railways and public transport, health, food and public services were all run as efficiently as previously if not more so, and on the whole more equitably. Not one of the collectives or co-operatives found itself unable to operate properly. Leval summed up his comprehensive first-hand account of the collectives by writing that

> "A new way has been indicated, an achievement which emerges as a beacon light of which all revolutionaries who seek mankind's emancipation and not its subjection to a new slavery will have to follow. If they do, yesterday's defeat will be largely compensated for by tomorrow's victories."
> (Gaston Leval,'Collectives in the Spanish Revolution', p.39)

Perhaps the same can be said of the history of anarchist organizing in Spain also. We've seen in it the only large scale and long lasting libertarian organization of modern times, and it has given us an invaluable way of tracing the evolution, problems and stages of the anarchist theory of organization which Proudhon began.

But the major problem he left unsolved still remains: namely, the ways that the small group, the mutual-aid group at the basis of mutualism, really works. We postulated earlier that the reason for the neglect of this area in classical anarchist

theory is because it took the concept of community for granted. Whether or not that postulation is a correct one is beside the point: modern sociologists have tried to remedy the fault if it exists. There seems no reasonable doubt that the impulse to work on 'community' arose in the social sciences because even though nobody knew what it was, people realized that it was becoming extinct. In the second section of the thesis, we'll look at some ideas of 'community', and some ideas of how to manufacture a substitute.

Summarising the first part, we have outlined both the concept of organizational form and the particular organizational form we are concerned with. We have established connexions between the form and a particular political and social tradition, and we have expounded that anarchist tradition and the theory behind it. And, in this chapter, we have gained some experience of how the anarchist organizational model has been used and developed historically. We have identified one major hole in the theory behind the anarchist organizational model, and it is with this that we shall be concerned in the second part of the thesis. Our approach will be in sharp contrast with the discussion up to this point: till now we have been laying a philosophical and historical foundation. The second part is more conventionally sociological. However different it may seem, the basic course we are pursuing remains constant. It is simply that it makes more sense to use sociological tools and concepts for the analysis of small-scale mutualism rather than the more historical, and more overtly political tools that we have employed up till now. Tackling a subject from a different angle may well shed more light on it, but the view will be unfamiliar to begin with. This is why we divide our text up into parts: because if one part is ended and another part begins, a change is not surprising but merely expected.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

CHAPTER FIVE

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY

There is no precise definition of what 'community' is, or even what the word means. Over 25 years ago, a social scientist called Hillery analysed 94 definitions then current, and found that the only thing on which they were all in agreement was that 'community' must involve people.(Cited in Bell & Newby, 'Community Studies',p.27). Since that classic tribute to the power of sociologists to generate muddles, the number of definitions has probably been increasing geometrically with time, with no greater degree of agreement. Evidence of this is to be found in the growth of a new academic industry which doesn't attempt to offer new definitions, but instead seeks to explain why the old firms failed to come up with a marketable product. The most convincing of these attempts to analyse why the concept is such an elusive one focus on the extent to which the word incorporates a whole host of value judgements. Community, remarked one commentator, tends to be a God word.

However, we aren't in the business of analyzing community for its own sake, but only for the purpose of shedding light on mutual-aid groups, on organizations based on voluntary action by those involved. Or to put it differently, what precisely is a mutual-aid group, and how does it differ from, say, a bureaucracy or a hierarchy? And what specific aspects of the nexus of ideas that go to make up 'community' can help us to answer that question? With this more limited scope, there is less danger of getting bogged down in semantic mire. Nevertheless, to attempt to answer our questions immediately is impossible without resorting to semi-mystical and quasi-religous ideas of neighbourliness,

brotherhood, and (that God word) community. Though their intuitive appeal is matched by their intuitive meaning, neither can in any way compensate for the lack of universal agreement on their use, especially when compared with the classic notions of goal, authority, self interest and so on. These offer a far greater analytical capacity when applied to formal, classically constructed organizations than we have at our disposal if we want to talk about mutual-aid groups. Our first job is to try and extract some equally useful concepts for this latter purpose from the available literature on 'community', and similar fields.

We observed in an earlier chapter that just as there is no agreed definition of community, there is no agreed definition of organization either. Yet whilst people have not been slow to point out the evaluative element in the former, the values implicit in the sociological use of the word 'organization' have, regrettably, not been taken up in the same way. The reasons for this lie deep in the very roots of the whole social scientific enterprise as it has evolved since the days of the Enlightenment (in the eighteenth century) and even earlier. In particular we can point to the very strong ideological links which have always been present between social science and the 'problem of social order'. In seeking to try and explain why human beings function socially in the way that they do, in a scientific manner, it is an almost inevitable consequence that an aspiring scientist will come up with laws which show (as scientific laws are meant to show) that they actually must function in the particular way that they do. The enterprise is tinged with conservatism from the start. When sociologists talk about organization, they don't talk about any possible one, or any possible form: they talk about the ones that they can see at the moment in time they are concerned with. It is clearly improbable that such an approach would give us any insight into what makes a totally different form of organization tick, and indeed, the use of the word 'anarchy' as a synonym for disorganization and chaos is a result of this approach. Similarly, though we want to talk about community in

the same sort of way as we now talk about organization (in at least the conservative sense), there is little doubt that the values implicit in the way the concept developed in the last century have influenced us in such a way as to make the attempt very difficult. Somehow, the holes in the two concepts are either different sizes or different shapes: and consequently retain different levels of meaning.

In addition to these difficulties we also have the problem that in many ways the idea of community is taken as being an irreducible one, with the corollary that there is no point in trying to reduce it further. In other words, any attempt to analyse it is doomed to failure, as Wittgenstein observed in a different context about the concept 'red'. For example, Nisbet has claimed that the basic units of our sociological thought revolve around the dichotomies of authority/power, status/class, sacred/secular, alienation/progress, and community/society. Attractive though this approach may seem, we can find that other thinkers with the same fundamentalist bent have used halves of these dichotomies in completely different pairings. To name but a few: Etzioni contrasts authority not with power but with compliance, Durkheim contrasted sacred with profane rather than secular, and Buber contrasts not community but politics with society. We could perhaps derive some fundamental trichotomies from these: authority/power/compliance, sacred/secular/profane, and community/society/politics - and then complete the set of five with, say, Maine's status/contract dichotomy and the common progress/reaction dichotomy to give us status/class/contract and alienation/progress/reaction. I don't intend to digress along this line of discourse any further, fruitful though the results may be. We can safely conclude from its beginnings that a two-dimensional analysis of multi-dimensional concepts isn't the only way to proceed.

The dimension of community which is most often stressed by social scientists is the evaluative one; we usually find that its virtues and subjective meaning are more prominent than anything

else. We don't want to say that the concept is a value-free one, because it clearly isn't, but then neither are various concepts of organization value-free either as we have just seen (consider our use of 'well-organized' or 'badly organized' if you want to reflect on the implicit values). However, stressing the evaluative dimension in anything isn't simply pointing out a fact, but is itself a perjorative utterance. A case can be made for the truth of the accusation that social scientists have relegated whole areas of social life to a theoretical scrapheap by dubbing them evaluative, whilst at the same time ignoring the values taken for granted in other contexts, and I think that our discussion of 'organization' and of 'community' has shown this quite clearly. Other values are simply taken for granted, the chief of these being the usually unrecognized ones we use when we distinguish some things as ends, other things as means, and judge one as being more important than the other. These are the values of rationality, and rationalists (including most scientists) regard them as being possibly more fundamental to their work than facts. Other values, by implication, are irrational and perhaps insane. Rational in some contexts means reasonable, whilst irrational in the same context is synonymous with unreasonable: but this is not the context in which we ought to be thinking. The essential step in the rationalist method is to identify means and ends, and anything that doesn't fit into this neat scheme is termed evaluative, or irrational, or even undesirable. Sociology students are still taught today how the discovery of the irrational parts of organizational functioning were discovered at the Western Electric Company in 1929, yet as late as the 1960's Blumberg could still write a book showing, among other things, that the result of these studies was systematically misinterpreted, due in large part to their relegation to the 'irrational' pigeonhole. In fact, what is irrational and inexplicable to people who stick to a purely rational set of ends-means assumptions makes perfect sense if those assumptions can be abandoned. A more well known instance of this same

approach can be found in the early writings of R.D. Laing on the behaviour of mad people. He took personal behaviour described as mad, and showed how it can make perfect sense if we don't try and fit it into our own behavior patterns but start with a fresh slate: part of Laing's thesis is that the medical rational model has distorted our own perception of how schizophrenics behave.

TONNIES AND THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

What we shall do is examine the genesis of the concepts of both community and organization in order to see the way in which one emerged as unscientific, evaluative, and theoretically irreducible, whilst the other came to be seen as the epitome of rational behaviour - organizational as the cure for all social malaise. In the process of rescuing some of the usefulness of the word "community", we will inevitably call into question the utility of some of the other concept, of organization. We'll concentrate our attention on the work and theories of Ferdinand Tonnies and Max Weber. Tonnies, in his book 'Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft' (usually transalated as 'Community and Association') laid out the parameters within which most later theorists of community operated. Weber performed the same service for organization theory in his 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft' (usually transalated as 'Economy and Society).

There is a similarity in the work of both these men in that they both use rationality as one of their central concepts, and both arrive at this position through a consideration of human action and motivation. Virtually all typologies of human social action must rely on some motivational considerations. However, attributing motives to people is at the best of times a suspect and risky business, and to use those motives as a basis for theorizing could be considered quite unsound. Yet there is no easy alternative. I've attributed simplistic motives to people in this thesis, and no doubt will do so again. There is a temptation

to think that while we cannot see inside one individual's head, a group of people acting together is quite a different matter. Even if this is true in some cases, it is an assumption with no logical foundation, despite the fact that it has always been used in an a priori manner. So, given that all we can say about human motivation is really neither more nor less than speculation, there is enough reason for us to begin from a different assumption.

The statement we shall take as a typical example of what we are questioning is one that Tonnies makes at the beginning of his introduction -

> "What, why and how do thinking human beings will and want ? The simple and most general answer is: that they want to attain an end and seek the most appropriate means of attaining it. They strive towards a goal, and seek the correct way leading thereto."
> ('Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft',p.14)

The beauty of this as an opening statement is that on one level it cannot be argued with because it is pure tautology. Indubitably, if we look for the sort of goals Tonnies describes, we shall always be able to find them, even if the goal is self-gratification: and consequently, we will have a magical key for explaining all human action. Yet we know that there are different levels of human motivation, and most people can recognize them.

Consider a man chopping a tree down with an axe, and think of the questions about his motivation that might reasonably be asked. "Why are you doing that?" is the basic question, but it can be asked over and over again of each and every statement with which he responds .

"I'm chopping the tree down" says our hero when first approached, and follows up with ..."Because it has Dutch Elm disease" ..... "Because that is the only way of stopping the

spread of the disease"....."Because I don't want other elms to die"....."Because I like them, they look nice".....at which point the mad sociologist asking all these irritating questions is attacked by a man wielding a large axe and has to run away. Beauty is truth, truth beauty: that, one suppose, is all you need to know. But is our man with the axe simultaneously performing some half dozen different actions?

If we reject that as an idiotic way of looking at it, we have to decide which explanation is the true one. Maybe none of them are true. Ask a pre-school child why they're blowing bubbles in the tea, and the chances are you'll get either "I want to", "I don't know" or "because .." as an answer. Rationality has to be learned like anything else if its starting point, the identification of goals, is any indication. There is no evidence to support the contention that human beings have a fixed innate tendency to act towards one fixed goal. We are not all suffering from monomania. Most people would accept that to look for only one motive in a set of multi-layered levels of action is misguided: our man with an axe had a lot of good reasons for chopping away, not just one.

The straw men we are attacking here are not so very far away from Tonnies and Weber. Though they both recognized that action is explicable only in a multiplicity of motivations, they both based their theories of community and of organization on identifying just one type of motivation as being a central one. Both justified this on the grounds of using ideal types, but an ideal type is surely meant to be an exaggeration of reality, not a distortion of it. There is a good case to be made out for the use of ideal types when there is a definite tendency for the phenomenon under investigation to tend towards one pole. If the phenomenon does not show such a tendency, then the usefulness is limited, and if (as with motivation) it is inherently multipolar then the use of ideal types is misleading. To look at a multifaceted phenomenon from only one point of view cannot give a true perspective, and to claim that the other

possible perspectives are unimportant is to compound the error by producing a circular justification.

Attempts at ideal-typical analysis of motivation are in the best traditions of sociological gobbledygook. Tonnies began his attempt with an a priori discussion of human will. In his distinctive and inimitable style, the incomprehensibility of which shines through despite the best efforts of the translator, he wrote:

> "The concept of human will, the correct interpretation of which is essential to the subject of this treatise (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft) implies a twofold meaning. Since all mental action involves thinking, I distinguish between the will which includes the thinking and the thinking which encompasses the will. Each represents an inherent whole which unites in itself a multiplicity of feelings, instincts and desires. This unity should in the first case be understood as a real or natural one; in the second case a conceptual or artificial one. The will of the human being in the first form I call natural will (Wesenwille); in the second form rational will (Kurwille)".
> (from 'Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, p.119)

He goes on to add that "natural will ..... involves thinking, rational will is a product of thinking itself." At another point, he adds a third category of intellectual will:

> "Intellectual will gets on well with subconscious motives which lie deep in mans' nature and at the base of his natural will, whilst rational will eliminates such disturbing elements and is as clearly

conscious as possible."
(ibid. p.15)

The second passage is quoted in case anyone thought they had fully understood the first one. Which is not to say that understanding is impossible - I suspect that Tonnies was trying to identify what Freud later termed id, ego and superego. Certainly such an identification helps make sense of what he says in the passages quoted above, even though the analogy is less useful later on.

To continue. Tonnies considered human relationships as cases of common volition. With his typology of wills, he derived two basic types of relationship. In a Gemeinschaft-like relationship, natural will predominates: in a Gesellschaft-like relationship, rational will predominates. These, he says, are ideal types. The Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft dichotomy thus made its dramatic entrance on to the sociological stage. The manner is rather like that of a conjuring trick: we are so much involved in watching the intricacies of the hand motions and gesticulations that the sleight-of-hand which pulls out the rabbit goes unnoticed. In this case, the palm of the conjurer concealed both the lack of precision and fuzziness of the 'Kurwille' and 'Wesenwille' and also the lack of any attempt to reconcile the admitted 'multiplicity of thoughts and desires' with the assertion that human will is basically a one-dimensional continuum. This isn't to say that the concepts of Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft aren't useful: they have proved their worth despite the inadequacies of their philosophical and scientific origins. Those inadequacies, though, are neither trivial nor accidental.

We've already seen that we are used to looking at things with an eye to rationalist explanations, always on the lookout for goals, and this may be a deceptively simple kind of operation. When Tonnies writes that -

> "on the one hand there is simple emotional (impulsive) and therefore irrational volition and action, and on the other there is the simple rational volition and action in which the means are arranged"
> (ibid, p.16)

we think we've understood him. Whereas what he has done is precisely what we earlier accused rationalists of doing: he has summarily dismissed everything which isn't goal directed from his enquiry, and our comprehension, because it is impulsive and irrational. So later on, when he comes out with all the profundities which may well be contained somewhere in his theses on the differences between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, we can only shake our heads sadly that the glories of gemeinschaft are becoming extinct in the pursuit of progress, and must remain forever incomprehensible and inaccessible to us. We can all agree on how one is organic and real, and how the other is artificial and mechanical, and sigh when Tonnies observes that

> "in Gemeinschaft people are united in spite of all separating factors"

whereas

> "in Gesellschaft people are separated in spite of all uniting factors."
> (ibid. p.74)

We appreciate only too well that a Gesellschaft is full of isolated, self-interested individuals, forever behaving like rational zombies, but we don't even notice that though community is for some reason unattainable, the reason is never explained. In fact, of course, it has been defined as primitively irrational

and therefore not susceptible to reason or causal explanation - not a proper subject of study for a scientist.

What has happened is that Tonnies began from the position that goals are what really matter. That this is a value-laden assertion we have noted before. It is hardly surprising that an approach which takes goals as being basic should make sense when applied to behaviour which is clearly aimed at a goal, but retreat into mysticism ("the flowers and fruits of the natural will")when confronted by any behaviour which might be easier to understand in other ways. The monotheism of the one goal is, like all monotheisms, fundamentally intolerant, and can only cope with apparently goal-less behaviour by labelling it irrational - the modern equivalent of heresy. By definition, such irrational behaviour is supposedly unpatterned and mad. Fit (supposedly) for women and children only, says the rational paternalist nineteenth century philosopher. But if 'community' is too evaluative by comparison with other concepts, it is only because the values attached to rationality - that goals are what count - have not been recognized.

That is fundamentally what is wrong with the classical view of community, as it developed from Tonnies' original formulation of 'Gemeinschaft'. There is an innate, rationalist, logic which mitigates against any attempt to make sense of community as having any bearing on organization, because organization as defined is quintessentially rational, whilst community is merely evaluative and 'simply emotional'. This isn't to say that the concepts are useless, but only that the way they were defined and the context in which they were refined were both fundamentally biased. The whole purpose of this criticism is to enable to us to perceive and understand this one-sidedness, so that when we try to understand how a mutual-aid group operates, we won't regard it as being mystically incomprehensible. As Bakunin once said in a different context, the urge to destroy is a creative urge.

WEBER AND THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATION

Max Weber began, like Tonnies, from a typology of action, but his subsequent exposition of the theory of organization and the 'Fundamental Concepts of Sociology' is both more resilient and more complex than that of Tonnies. Weber has shown that he has had, historically, more staying power. He begins from a slightly different question, for whereas Tonnies asked about will, Weber asked about motive instead.

> "What motives determine and lead the individual members and participants ..... to behave in such a way that the community came into being in the first place, and that it continues to exist?"
> (Weber, 'Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft' in 'Theory of Social and Economic Organization' ed. Parsons and Henderson)

Weber claims that any real enquiry begins with this question. It is both clearer and more powerful (in terms of leading to useful questions) than asking, as Tonnies did, what people want: but as framed by Weber it is important to see that it is a variant of the problem of social order, which we have already criticized. Weber doesn't go on to classify motives, but instead talks of 'modes of orientation' of actions. There are four such modes. Affectual actions are oriented towards emotions and feelings. Traditional actions are oriented towards habits. The quadruple classification is completed by two types of rational action: 'wertrational' actions are oriented towards ultimate ends, or values, whilst 'zweckrational' actions are oriented towards specific goals. Weber does not say, however, precisely what a 'mode of orientation' is, nor does he explain how it relates to a motive. This is not a trivial objection. It seems slightly odd to

have to rely on purely subjective assessments when deciding what type of action any instance belongs to. The closest we ever get to having a definition of 'mode of orientation' is as a "typically appropriate subjective meaning" (ibid,p.120). We know that motives can have multiple levels in many instances: Weber admits as much himself. "It would be unusual to find concrete cases of action ..... which were oriented in only one or other of these ways"(ibid,p,117).

The nub of the problem lies in the way we decide which modes to ignore, the way we determine which mode of action is appropriate. Though all are subjective, some are more subjective than others, and in the last analysis the choice of the most significant level depends not on any intrinsic quality of the action itself, but on the way we want to incorporate it into our theories. Take any action - someone chopping down a tree, again, will do nicely, as it is one used by Weber himself (ibid,p.95). He points out that it may be performed to work off a fit of rage, or to make firewood, or to earn money. It might be done to save other trees: or perhaps it is a pine, and Christmas is approaching. We are trying to establish the mode of orientation of the action. The first thing we have been trained to do is to look for a motive - a rational goal. The form of the question is 'Why .....?", and it leads to an answer in the form "Because. An overwhelming urge on the part of an aspiring scientist is to look for outside corroboration, an objective need - in short, a goal. Unless one happens to be a psychiatrist, in which case the temptation is to see all action as being affectual. Which is not a flippant point - we choose to decide which mode of action we shall regard as being the most significant, and the significance we look for is the significance for us. A psychiatrist's needs are different to a sociologist's, as his profession depends on analysing feelings, not goals: so a psychiatrist would tend to see all action as affectual rather than rational. We are trying to expose a deep seated bias in the enterprise itself.

Weber was perceptive enough to recognize this bias. "It is unavoidable tendency of sociological concepts to assume a rationalistic character with a belief in the predominance of rational motives or even a positive value of rationalism" (ibid,p.107). He anticipates our criticism but his distinction between the rationalist bias of the enterprise and the values of rationality is unconvincing, and the confusion he warns us against is therefore equally unclear to anyone seeking to avoid it. Weber was led to conclude that all values are irrational - "the more the value to which the action is oriented is elevated to the status of an absolute value, the more 'irrational' ..... the corresponding action is." (ibid,p.117). Everybody knows you can't argue with a fanatic, which is what the quotation seems to be saying, but Weber has clearly thrown his baby out with his bathwater. He makes clear that in the sense in which he uses the term, anything 'irrational' cannot be a guide to action, which equally clearly implies irresponsibility on the part of an irrational actor. If that isn't placing a 'positive value on rationality', I should like to know what is.

His anticipation of the problem didn't prevent Weber incorporating precisely the rationalist values he was so wary of into his exposition of fundamental concepts. Of particular importance to us here is his own version of the Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft distinction, and his subsequent treatment of what constitutes order in a group. These questions lie at the heart of any analysis of what a mutual-aid group is. Weber said that we would be in error if we gave a positive value to rationalism. We don't know for certain what Weber believed: but if any one person can be held responsible for incorporating rationalist values into organization theory, it was he. (If we wanted to hold two people responsible, the other would almost certainly be Taylor, of scientific management fame.)

Weber's own terms for the distinction which in his thought occupies the place of the Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft distinction were Vergemeinschafung and Vergesellschafung: usually translated

as 'communal' and 'associative'. A communal relationship

> "is based on a subjective feeling of the parties whether affectual or traditional that they belong together. A social relationship will, on the other hand, be called associative if and only in so far as the orientation of the social action within it rests on a rationally motivated adjustment of interests or a similiarly motivated agreement, whether the basis of the rational judgement be absolute values or expediency."
> (ibid,p.136)

Rational judgements are thus firmly distinguished from any other sort, based on tradition or feeling. Before evaluating this, let us move on to the next stage in the argument.

Weber defined a 'corporate group' as a social relationship with some sort of order: fixed members, for example, denotes some order. An 'organization' is then defined as a separate type of group, as a "system of purposive activity of a specified kind"(ibid,p.151). It isn't necessary to have people: there is organization in a robot assembly line. The key elements in this are System and Purpose: many contemporary analysts use the same concepts, for instance in defining organizations as purposeful systems.

The next step is to combine both these ideas into that of a corporate organization, an 'associative social relationship' characterized by purposeful activity of a specified kind, undertaken by administrators. Weber then goes on incorporate his concepts of authority and control.

But once again, a conjurer has been up to some clever tricks. What has happened is that the quite plausible notions of communal and associative relationships have been combined with the concept of organization to yield not two types of human

social organization, as we might expect, but only one. Corporate groups are defined as being associative ones only, and communal organizations have been stipulated out of existence. Presumably Weber thought that a communal relationship, based on subjective feelings of belonging, could have no purpose without becoming an associative group (but because Weber is dead, we'll never know). His legacy was thus one with an inherently rationalist bias, despite his warnings to us to avoid the temptation. Communal groups are left as a footnote, whilst all the subsequent discussion is centred on the associative ones. We have seen that organization is partially derived from the concept of corporate group, which is characterized by maintenance of order in a social relationship: but again, we find that Weber's discussion of types of order is confined to associative groups only. And needless to say, the whole of his seminal discussion of power, control, authority and legitimation is conducted solely in relation to associative groups. He does allow for the possibility of legitimate order in a group based on subjective feelings of belonging, but at no point spends any time on it. This is a curious omission for a supposedly objective investigator, for clearly one might expect a different type of order would be needed in a group which was communal. Anything resembling coercive authority could be expected to undermine feelings of belonging in such a group if it were the major method of co-ordinating activity.

So despite his assertion that a rationalist enterprise need not endorse rationalist values, all Weber's analysis is concentrated on the type of group he himself has defined as being the more rational, to the exclusion of any other type. When he makes his own distinction between voluntary and compulsory organization (which he calls 'Anstalt' and 'Verein'), the one we began with, he simply gives us his definitions without any discussion, and states that both are associative: rationalistic and goal-directed above all else. The implicit assumption that no communally based group can be associative is one which Weber

never seeks to defend or to justify - indeed, the case goes by default. But it is an assumption for which there is no theoretical basis at all. It can be considered a prime example of the bias that Weber was so keen to avoid creeping into his work, and turns out to be false even in his own work.

Consider the following quotation, which makes a point fundamental to any theory of mutual-aid groups, but which Weber entirely fails to follow through or connect up with his analysis.

> "It is by no means true that the existence of common qualities, a common situation, or common modes of behaviour imply the existence of a communal social relationship. Thus, for instance, the possession of a common biological inheritance by virtue of which people can be classified as belonging to the same 'race' naturally implies no sort of communal social relationship between them. By restrictions on social intercourse and on marriage, people may find themselves in a similiar situation, a situation of isolation from the environment which imposes these distinctions. But even if they all react to this situation in the same way, this does not constitute a communal relationship. The latter does not even exist even if they all have a common 'feeling' about this situation and its consequences. It is only when this feeling leads to a mutual orientation of their behaviour to each other that a social relationship arises between them, a social relationship to each other and not only to the persons in the environment. Furthermore, it is only in so far as this relationship involves

feelings of belonging together that it is a 'communal relationship'."
(ibid,p,138)

Weber then illustrates this point by saying that whilst Jews didn't necessarily have any communal relationship with each other, they did in Zionist circles. Yet Zionism, even at that time, was a purposive political movement; before the 1930's it was largely a mutual-aid network amongst Jews aimed at establishing a national home. So, using Weber's own example, it is clear that an organization can be both communal and purposive - a fact his theory does not allow for.

The account of the genesis of a communal relationship we quoted at some length is important. It can apply to virtually any mutual-aid group existing today - community groups, groups in the Women's Movement, disabled persons' groups, and even Kropotkin's cyclists: the stage of realizing a common condition and problem, mutually oriented action followed by the stage of trying to do something together. Only this last was omitted in Weber's account. The process of the development of what is essentially a political consciousness which we've uncovered is an important point which is central to many modern mutual-aid groups, who exist in a pressure-group political environment.

The removal of the communal, or Gemeinschaft, elements from the rationalist theories developed by the Tonnies-Weber tradition was reinforced by the popularity in the early part of this century of Taylor and his 'scientific management' theories, which were probably central in institutionalizing organization theory as a branch of social science in schools of management and administration (as well as sociology) on both sides of the Atlantic. Taylor built his ideas on the same rationalist basis, in his case on the assumption that people, to answer Tonnies' question about what people want, act out of individual self-interest and gain. His 'science' consisted of attempts to find the right carrot to dangle in front of the donkey. Even after the recognition of the complexity of human action and behaviour in

the thirties, when Elton Mayo and the 'human relations' school were busy rediscovering the fact that individuals can never be treated as if they act purely in isolation, and were exploring the nature of the relationships which develop among groups of people who work together or are put in common situations, the assumptions really didn't change much. Human relationships a la Mayo were too often seen as a barrier to efficient and truly rational functioning, and really wouldn't exist in an ideal world. The carrot wasn't offered up raw any longer: instead, managers went off to learn about group dynamics from Kurt Lewin, and read about 'informal organization' (as any communal elements were known - as if they were somehow improper). The mental shackles of rationalism were never really thrown off.

We've seen how community theory and organization theory have so developed as to reject and mystify many of the key concepts we are likely to need in looking at mutual-aid groups as purposive organizations. Many people in such mutual-aid groups would be very puzzled by the fact that according to the books, they ought not to exist at all. Developing new attitudes and assumptions isn't done overnight, but we ought to try now to start from the beginning and find a new set if we can. One thing we do know is that we won't assume that the most important things about a group or a person are goals. The cumulative effect of the old theories was to establish a completely unnecessary and misleading dichotomy between groups which have goals, between types of relationships which can be explained in rationalist terms, and between those communal relationships which cannot be so explained. Unless we bridge that gap, we'll never be able to understand what the basis of a mutual-aid group is.

Our next step is to put together some parts of the discussion of organizational form with which we began with the critique of rationalism we've developed just now. It ought to be possible to do this with a better awareness of the way in which values necessarily affect any way of looking at social phenomena, and with a clearer idea of what we want to achieve.

CHAPTER SIX

CHAPTER SIX

FINDING A PLACE TO START

We are going to look at mutual-aid groups and attempt to do so without the rationalistic (goal-directed) bias which creeps into the ways of looking at organization and community we've looked at up to now. Tonnies began with the question "What, why and how do thinking human beings will and want?" When Tonnies answered his own question by saying that people "want to attain an end and seek the correct way leading thereto", the questions what, why and how became confused, levels of motivation became mixed up, and the answer to the 'how' part tacitly ignores any non goal-directed behaviour. So perhaps this might not be the best question to ask as a beginning. It also leads, as we have seen, directly to attempts to categorize action according to goals or motives, There are a number of good reasons (which we worked out in the last chapter) why this is not a good move.

Firstly, the imputation of motives and will to actions or groups of actions is pure guesswork, since the motive cannot be directly observed in individuals, let alone in large groups, where the existence of a group motive is probably in doubt. Secondly, it always results, for social scientists, in rationalist explanation - that after all is what the question is designed to bring out, and other kinds of answer are absent. Thirdly, it always appears necessary for efforts on these lines to include such catch-all categories as 'natural will' or 'affectual action', which serve two main functions. They give the appearance of completeness to an inadequate typology, and they also act as dustbins, whose acceptable names are synonymous with

'irrational' and whose contents wouldn't fit neatly into a rational scheme in any case. Nothing much is really explained - rather like the phlogiston theory of combustion, which postulated a substance called 'phlogiston' , the release of which gave the appearance of flame. All phlogiston meant was inflammability.

As Popper keeps on pointing out in relation to Marx and Freud, theories which explain everything in this way explain nothing at all. Probably there is a certain value in them as a way of seeing, as a perspective on the world, but that is about all. Once this is granted, it follows that there may well be some things which they cannot be used to look at with much success. This argument applies to any perspective, but here and now we apply it to rationalist ones in particular.

So it would seem we must begin with a different type of approach. Not only are motives and goals too abstract an approach, but a case can be made for the view that to say most human beings want to attain an end is actually untrue of most of our behaviour. People are usually caught up inside patterns of events with an internal logic all of their own. Introspectively at any rate, the idea of continuous behaviour directed towards a single goal seems to be a myth. I am usually more concerned with style than with substance - with doing something efficiently, or quickly, or beautifully, or well, or even with just plain finishing whatever it is rather than asking myself whether or not it is worthwhile doing in the first place. Most employment is of this nature. People fall into patterns of action rather than aiming for specific goals all the time. Categorizing such behaviour as 'affectual' or 'traditional' is beside the point here: the point is that motives and goals are simply not the right things to ask questions about. In as much as they are important, they too form part of a total pattern of behaviour. The central task becomes to understand how the pattern works and how it is maintained. So we could try shifting our starting point to actions rather than motives - possibly a better place to start, as there is an objective reality to refer to.

We could reformulate Tonnies' question and answer: What, why and how do thinking human beings really act? They behave in certain patterns. This rather unpromising way of putting things is simply an assertion that ends and goals don't exist in isolation. Patterns of social action and behaviour are a truer representation of reality than models based on goals or motives. As it stands, it is just as a priori as any assumption made by the rationalist theories. Again, though, it is only meant as an illustration that there are other possible ways of analysing social action. Quite clearly, I've no great commitment to the idea of pattern as a fundamental concept either. Our impetus came from the need to start somewhere else, not with will, motives or goals.

We have used a minimal definition of organization as coordinated human behaviour, and referred to the way it was coordinated as the form of the organization. To say that an organization is also a pattern of actions is to restate the same thing, but starting from the point we have just reached. Both definitions are in many ways too broad for most uses, but though not sufficient as conditions they are both necessary. Even if patterns of organization exist outside organizations, you'll never find an organization without patterns of action within itself. The topography of the pattern, the way coordination happens - what we have called the form - emerges as one of the central features of the organization: so we see that starting from questions about action, we find our attention directed towards forms, whereas Weber started from motives and ended up with goals. Not only can we connect up social theory and organizational form, but we see once again evidence of one of our earlier anarchist precepts - the means we use in our argument affect the conclusion we come to, and that the ends can't be separated from the means. Both are part of human behaviour patterns.

Earlier we observed that voluntary and compulsory organization were two distinct forms. We have to develop this theme more fully. Our patterns of action are rather like a jigsaw - we have no single coordinating concept central to our argument, simply a place from which we begin. When doing a jigsaw, the universal method of proceeding is to get the bits with the straight edges done first. We have analagous pieces to our patterns here - concepts we have been using unreflectively, all of which we have been assuming have straight edges, so to speak. If we are to complete a pattern of mutual-aid groups, we have to fit these straight edges to each other. We have two groups of concepts with straight edges. The first includes ideas of order, control, coordination, authority, leadership, legitimacy and power. The second group of concepts include voluntary, compulsory, mutual, belonging, self-interest and co-operation. All the pieces in the first group relate to the organization and its effects on the individual, whilst the second group, conversely, are more about the individuals and their relation with the organization. At least that is the idea - the object of the first collection is the group with the individual as the subject, and in the second collection the individual is the object and the group the subject. The way we fit these concepts together is the next item on our agenda.

CONCEPTS OF AUTHORITY

Organizations of any type or form, like all other human interactions, are composed of people acting according to certain rules. The concept of rule-governed behaviour, and following a rule, has passed from philosophy to social science, and the first thing we'll do is to look at what a rule is, and how it relates to authority - how the bits fit together. Peter Winch has argued that

> "The acceptance of authority is not just something that, as a matter of fact, you cannot get along without if you want to participate in rule-governed activities; rather, to participate in rule-governed activities is in a certain way to accept authority. For to participate in such activity is to accept that there is a right and a wrong way of doing things, and that the decision of what is right or wrong in a particular case can never depend completely on one's own caprice."
> (Winch, 'Authority' in 'Political Philosophy' ed. Quinton)

Raymond Plant, who also cites the above passage, develops the argument further and brings in the connection with community.

> "Community, as a sphere of interaction, must be rule-governed, and thus authority is a necessary condition of community."
> (Plant,'Community and Ideology',p.54)

What exactly does authority mean here? In the context in which Plant uses the term, he is talking about the exercise of authority by social workers, but he never works out precisely what the semantic content of the word is. Clearly, if all authority is exercised by individuals, which appears to be the interpretation to which Plant tacitly adheres in his defence of the social worker's exercise of it, there are organizational implications of particular relevance to anarchist theory. We've tried to link up mutual aid and community before, and found that an approach via rationalist assumptions is undesirable because it is too evaluative. This argument appears somewhat different

because on the surface it proceeds from linguistic assumptions rather than rationalist ones, and as it stands it applies to all groups, organizations and spheres of human life. It demands close scrutiny.

Authority is one of those concepts whose use in sociology derives, like that of bureaucracy, from Weber. Virtually everybody follows or cites him in defining authority as being the same as legitimate power, where power is the ability to impose one's will on others. The legitimacy, according to Weber's equally well-known schematic, is either rational-legal, charismatic, or traditional - most people seem to regard legitimacy as being the critical element in authority. The thrust of Plant's argument, from which the above was taken, is to reassure supposedly non-directive social workers that they don't have to worry about the power they possess because community - which they of course approve of - implies some sort of authority (that is, legitimate power) in any case. The relationship between community, power, legitimacy and authority is thus very much influenced by Weber, despite the apparently innocuous linguistic origins of Plant's argument.

The idea that rule-governed behaviour necessarily implies acceptance of authority in the sense of legitimate power wielded by someone else is, I contend, fundamentally mistaken. It is confused on at least two different levels, because the concepts used are ambiguous.

The first level of ambiguity lies in the concept of a rule. John Rawls has pointed out in a different context that there are two ways to use the word.

> "Those engaged in a practice recognise the rules as defining it. The rules cannot be taken as simply describing how those in the practice in fact behave: it is not as if they were simply obeying the rules ..... In a game of baseball, if a batter were to ask 'Can I

> have four strikes?' it would be assumed that he was asking what the rule was: and if, when told what the rule was he were to say that he meant that on this occasion he thought it would be best on the whole for him to have four strikes rather than three, this would most kindly be taken as a joke."
> ('Two Concepts of Rules' in 'Theories of Ethics, ed. Philippa Foot)

Rawls goes on to say that the whole point of the illustration is that behaviour governed by such rules of practice doesn't need legitimation: it is the practice itself which needs legitimation if anything does.

It is clear that according to my reading of what he says, Plant has confused the two concepts of rules. Obeying a rule in the first sense is following a summary directive, acquiescing in someone else's use of power, enforced upon you. Someone makes a rule, you obey, so they have authority over you. In the second sense, though, engaging in activity governed by rules of practice isn't accepting authority in the sense of legitimate power - except in special cases, such as learning how to play a game from someone, or going to speech classes. Most of the time, we can indulge in such rule governed behaviour without anyone in particular exerting any authority over us thereby. Language is rule-governed behaviour, as is well known - but to speak the Queen's English doesn't mean that the Queen has authority over our behaviour when we speak. Legitimate power is an inapplicable concept here. By its very nature, such authority must be vested in some purpose or institution for it to be enforceable. Even when we are teaching children how to speak, or learning a foreign tongue, the only real sanction is that if one doesn't learn then one won't be understood. We may break the rules of grammar with relative impunity - we may not be understood when we do, but we are unlikely to be arrested for grievous syntactical damage. When

we engage in action covered by non-enforceable rules of practice, we aren't accepting authority in the Weberian sense at all. The fact that there is a right and a wrong way of doing something doesn't mean a thing in this regard if nobody enforces sanctions aimed specifically at discouraging further breaches of the rule. If we break these rules we are incompetent rather than wicked.

The second level of ambiguity relates to the idea of legitimacy. There are two levels at least on which we can talk about the legitimacy of a practise, which emerge clearly if we bring the concept of order into our jigsaw. In one sense, order is equivalent to the notion of an authoritarian system. Weber analysed this level fully, dividing it into regulative and administrative order, but the sense is the same. A group of people decide what is to be, or how something is to be done, and then get others to obey them in an ordered (corporate) group. In this meaning of order, classically formal organizations from armies and railways to coal mines and hospitals are ordered. What appear to be rules of practise are simple rules of thumb, such as clocking on in the morning. Each deviation is noted and punished by the authorities who enforce the order. Rules are enforced. Order is maintained. Weber analysed the legitimacy of this sort of order at some length.

The second sense of order is analagous to the second sense of rule. It is the same sort of order on finds in logic, mathematics, or the periodic table of elements. This isn't enforceable or enforced: it needs no legitimation because the order is built into the pattern. Like rules of practise, to be a part of that order is to accept it. When Tonnies talked of Gemeinschaft as being real and Gesellschaft as being artificial, the mystical and esoteric sense in which one takes the remarks mask this possible and plausible difference in the type of order in the two groups. Once defined as part of the second of our kinds of order, an internal logic guides one's actions. Which doesn't necessarily mean that free choice is abolished. When playing chess, for instance, there is an infinite number of

possible moves which you can choose from, all of which fit into the ordered rules of the game of chess. All the decisions are taken within the rules which order the game, and allow us to play it at all. The case of this sense of order which interests us most in human behaviour is in co-operative relationships. To behave co-operatively is to maintain a co-operative order to the relationship. Authority, once again, doesn't belong here, simply because to enforce a co-operative action is a logical impossibility - either it is free or it isn't co-operative. Certainly, there may well be a rationale which underlies this activity, but it isn't a legitimation of power and is consequently not to be equated with authority in a Weberian sense. It would be mistake to suppose that anything which has a legitimate purpose, a justification or a rationale is necessarily authoritarian. Once again, the rules of English grammar, which consist of the order of the words in the language when combined with their meanings, are legitimate and justified, but that does not make English an authoritarian language.

The argument that all rule-governed behaviour involves the acceptance of legitimate power is most certainly mistaken. Equally mistaken is any argument seeking to hold that all ordered activity means someone must do the ordering. There is a clear need for a clearer terminology when talking about these areas. To use the words power or authority in the accepted Weberian sense may be mistaken, but there is certainly a need to find a way of talking about the kind of order which doesn't include the imposition of one person's will on another, and the type of authoritative elements which are not authoritarian.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND AUTHORITATIVENESS

Possibly the most common semantic distinction which is made to resolve the ambiguity which revolves around the word 'authority' is between the twin concepts of authoritarian and authoritative. Though both derive from the same word, the

implications of each are very different. The type of authority which is authoritarian is the Weberian one, meaning the legitimate use of power, where power is defined as the ability to impose one's will on others. It derives from the status of the person in authority, and is ultimately sanctioned by coercion - the ability to punish, fire, arrest or to fine are among the possible sanctions applied. The type of authority which is authoritative, by contrast, involves the use of knowledge rather than force - knowledge may be power, but it is neither coercive nor imposed on others. Authoritativeness derives not from status, but from skill, experience and expertise. It is sought rather than imposed, and the only sanction is the possibility of failure through not heeding advice.

The two notions are not ideal types, for they are not logically distinct - they are not at either end of a continuum. They often turn out to be inextricably linked in practice - not only is some knowledge typically reserved for those wielding authoritarian authority, such as financial information possessed by management in large companies but not possessed by workers, but many with specific skills in any situation use the sanction of witholding their transmission or application to gain coercive power. Some professions in particular - law and medicine are the most clear cut example - involve both authoritative and authoritarian elements. The confusion between the two types of authority is genuine, and often deliberate. Commonly the intent is to mystify whoever is subject to authority by using the undoubted element of skill and expertise to legitimize the elements of coercion. Thus arbitrary decisions can be cloaked in the veil of superior knowledge, and knowing what is best. In practise this avoids thorny problems of rightness as well as legitimacy, whilst even in theory it is still a device commonly used to legitimize the institutionalization of professional power. As Plant did in the passage quoted earlier, all that is needed is a demonstration that superior skill is involved, and the fallacious conclusion that authority of any sort is

legitimate is thereby drawn. And therefore someone has to exercise that authority, so it might as well be me/us/the State.

April Carter has made a strong case for distinguishing between authority and legitimacy. She says

> "Legitimacy may ..... be fostered and upheld by propaganda, that is by psychological forms of force and manipulation. Authority, by contrast, is characterized by an absence of coercion and requires voluntary and free acceptance, and thus to point to true authority does imply some kind of moral approval."
> ('Authority and Democracy',p.52)

The same sort of distinction we made above has been made here, except that Carter talks about authoritarian authority - legitimate power in the Weberian sense - as being 'legitimation', and uses 'authority' as we have authoritativeness. There is an added ingredient perhaps of compliance in Carter's analysis, but the impetus is clearly the same. This underlines the need for an accepted terminology - we haven't used Carter's form of words because it clashes too much with accepted usage.

The whole of our first group of concepts have concomitant ambiguities to those we have seen in the ideas of rules, order and authority. For instance, there is a clear distinction between the concept of leadership in a group as a set of functions, providing for decision-making, planning and so on, and the concept of leadership as the charismatic order-giving and being accepted type of personal figure which tends to be associated with the same word. When we say a group needs leadership, do we mean that it needs to obey a leader, or do we mean it lacks decision-making processes and proper planning procedures?. The latter group of functions are quite easily carried out by a cohesive and co-operating group, responsive and responsible to a

larger membership. Were this type of group to function properly, we wouldn't say the group still needed a general or a dictator of some sort. At least, I hope we wouldn't.

The same point can be made about the idea of control in a group. We confuse - or tend to - the control by the group (of its environment) with the control of the group (by something or someone either within it or outside it). We shan't go into detail on this, or mention any further concepts. The nettle we have to grasp is that our concepts, which we may have been using happily all our lives, are highly susceptible to misapplication and consequent misinterpretation. They all have common ambiguities in that they can either assume individual roles where all that is needed are organizational functions, or they can assume coercive relationships where none are needed. When talking about relatively unstructured groups or voluntary relationships it would be wise to remember that the paradigm of organization we tend to use is a hierarchical one, and that this can confuse and distort our perception of common phenomena.

So the conclusion we have to draw from the first of our group of concepts is that the understanding of mutual-aid groups is as much an unlearning process as it is a learning one. All the concepts relate to our understanding of the individual as the object of an organization, as something which has been organized. It is only to be expected that this area is one where we are most liable to use concepts in the wrong way.

THE CONCEPT OF MUTUAL ACTION

The second of our groups of concepts we will find much more constructive, and possibly unfamiliar. It will be remembered that they all take the individual as the subject - not as something to be organized from without, but something doing its own organizing with other individuals, none of whom object - it is the organization itself which is the object of the actions of the people involved. The unfamiliarity comes from the fact that this

is not an area we have much experience of academically, and possibly not on the practical level either.

We will contrast voluntary, mutual, belonging and co-operation with compulsory and self-interest. This time we will hope to derive some positive conclusions - theorems, if you like - about our subject matter. What we want to do is to try and isolate some of the key issues at the heart of their common meaning. We shall begin with the two contrasting notions of mutual and self-interested action, and try and find out exactly what the contrast is. Many of us may not have considered there to be a contrast at all - we would perhaps have contrasted self-interest with disinterested, in the sense of altruistic or unselfish. This contrast is not open to us, as the essence of unselfishness or altruism is precisely the absence of a connection between the individual and the action, and we won't get anywhere with a concept which denies the relationship we want to examine.

It seems reasonable to say that action is mutual when it is undertaken by a group of people who pool their efforts and share their expectations and outcomes. (This applies to mutual destruction, assured or otherwise, as well as mutual aid). The OED, not a terribly good source of sociological insight but one that will serve well enough for clarification, defines mutual as " (of feelings, actions etc.) felt, done, by each to(wards) the other..". We've incorporated the notion of purpose in our extended version, in that the expectations and outcomes are included. The essence of any mutual action as contrasted with self-interested action - the purest form of mutual action, if you like - is that no individual regard themselves as any more important than any other participant, or equally importantly, any less important. (In such a case, the action would not be entirely mutual though elements of mutuality would be there). In this sense, employer and employee are engaged in mutual action in so far as each recognizes that neither one is dispensable, and in so far as both have the same expectations, of continuing employment.

Obviously, other actions of the parties may not be mutual at all. But in mutual-aid groups in particular, we want to draw a contrast between mutual interest and self-interest: the calculus of individual cost-benefits is suspended, and replaced with the assumption that whatever the group does is more important than whoever benefits from it individually. This is an assumption which we want to make into a central one. It is not equivalent to the assumption that all contribute and benefit equally: that is simply an equivalence of individual cost-benefits. There is a logical difference between this and the assumption of group benefit. 'No man is an island, entire of itself...'. The assumption, it will be noted, is liable to break down if individual benefits are manifestly unequal, for nobody can in the long run base their actions on a premise which is clearly false. But it would also be threatened if there were any attempt to separate out individual gains and losses, for a small inequality may be tolerable if unnoticed, but lethal if obvious to all.

Action which is self-interested, by contrast, is solely concerned with economic rationalism individually applied: the maximization of individual gains. The assumption here is that each individual is simply acting in such a way as to benefit as much as possible, and minimize any costs. Groups of people acting out of self-interest can and do form groups while acting purely selfishly as long as each one is secure in the knowledge that they are better off inside the group than they would be outside: an economic cartel is the classic example. The criticisms of rationalistic theories we developed earlier apply most clearly in this case, were the same type of analysis appropriate to a cartel applied to a mutual-aid group. This makes it particularly interesting to examine one theory of how such groups work: it will indicate as clearly as anything can what mutual aid is not. By what logicians call a 'reductio ad absurdum' we can then throw out the rationalist assumption and arrive at what mutual-aid groups are. We shall look at the exposition laid out by Mancur Olson in his book 'The Logic of Collective Action'. Olson, it

must be remembered, is concerned only with the actions of an economically rational set of individuals: people who want to maximize their benefits and minimize their costs, and regard the end as justifying any means used to reach it - people who know what they want, and 'seek the correct way leading thereto'.

What Olson shows which is so important to our argument is that such rational self-interested individuals will not be able to act together and stay together unless the group is very small, or coercion is used.

WHY SELF-INTERESTED ACTIONS CANNOT SUSTAIN A GROUP

He starts with the definition of a 'collective good' as being one which is shared by everyone in the group, whether they have contributed to the group or not. The observation that "the achievement of any common goal or the satisfaction of any common interest means that a public or collective good has been provided for that group" means that, as a logical consequence, any rational member of the group will not contribute towards the cost of provision of that good as long as they can get it for nothing. So, since no rational individual will contribute to the costs, they will not be met, and the good will not be provided: the group will disintegrate. So the group is led to use coercion, because unless people are forced to contribute, they will avoid doing so. (The taxation system is a good example.)

The only case where this does not apply is if, for someone in the group, the benefit they would get from their share of the collective good is greater than the whole cost of providing the good for themselves alone. And even in such a case, the amount of collective benefit would cease to grow beyond the point at which the marginal total cost of provision is equal to the marginal individual benefit obtained by that person. It is obvious that this situation would only arise in a small group, because it is only in a small group that the proportions of individual benefit to total cost will make such behaviour rational. The costs are

directly proportional to size, and the benefits are inversely proportional to size. In other words, the larger the group is, the larger the cost of provision in relation to the benefit, and the smaller the share of each individual - including the cost-bearer - will be.

A consideration of this argument (which is actually rather more technical in presentation in the original than I've presented it here, though the logic is the same) shows why we define a mutual-aid group in terms of people pooling their costs and benefits, their expectations and resources, and suspending the calculation of their own individual profit and loss accounts. Olson's argument shows that if a group were composed of economically rational individuals, it would not work or prosper. Such groups would, were rationalistic assumptions about behaviour to hold true, either remain very small or else resort to coercion. But large mutual-aid groups have existed in the past, and exist around us today. There has, in the last few years, been a mushrooming of self-help and co-operative activity, of mutual aid of all sorts in all fields from industry to play, from pensioners to mothers (not forgetting the cyclists). Since they do exist, they cannot therefore be composed of rationally acting individuals - quod erat demonstrandum. That is why the calculus of individual cost-benefit simply is inapplicable, and why the corollary that the group is more important than the individual is such a necessary one. But even if the members of the group aren't economic rationalists, they aren't going to be ostriches either: so they would probably not be able to carry on assuming that nobody is more or less important than anyone else, or that nobody is getting more out of the group than anyone else, if a state of affairs in which some specific person were doing so became manifestly obvious.

However, it is equally apparent that a mutual-aid group would be able to carry some individuals who did belong purely out of self-interest. As long as there weren't too many of them, the

logic of the Olson argument wouldn't come into effect, provided the disparity of effort and reward was not too great. This is in fact an essential ingredient for continuity or growth, since new members from outside the group must be able to join for these to occur, and few new members can be expected to have internalized the ethic of group benefit before individual benefit until they have been involved for some time. Furthermore, we know that if the assumption that the group benefit is the more important one (we'll call this the 'group ethic') does waver in strength over time, only compulsion or small size will stop a group being adversely affected to the point of possible disintegration. Since a mutual-aid group has been stipulated to be a voluntary organization, we shall dismiss compulsion as outside the scope of this preliminary discussion. But we can assume that the smaller a group is the more stable it is likely to be. For if the group ethic does waver and fluctuate in strength over time, the larger groups will be the first to collapse in times of weakness since the point at which it isn't worth bothering comes sooner.

THE GROUP ETHIC: RATIONAL OR EVALUATIVE?

We have to look at the group ethic in more detail. An argument advocated throughout this thesis has been for the need to regard rationalist and authoritarian assumptions in the social sciences in the same way as we regard other, equally evaluative assumptions about human action, and conversely, to give any assumption an equivalent consideration as a road to whatever truth or usefulness we can find. We've pointed out at some length the ways in which this rationalist paradigm came to exist, and how it affects most of our attitudes towards the analysis of community and organization. The fact that we have referred to the assumption of individuals in mutual-aid groups that what benefits the group will also benefit them as an ethic, does not mean that it is irrational. There is an inconsistency in rationalism in that a series of actions by individuals, each one of which is

strictly rational in itself, can result in a state of affairs in which they are in fact worse off than if they had not acted so as to minimize their losses - not acted rationally, that is. The way Olson presents the disintegration of a large group is a case typical of this phenomenon, which is often known as the tragedy of the commons - overgrazing common land results in useless pasture for everyone, but any one person is better off if they do not restrict their grazing animals. Hunting whales to extinction and the arms race are further example of this (with more severely obvious moral overtones). The end result of all these cases is that nobody is better off, and everyone is worse off.

This has led some analysts of rational action (such as Michael Taylor in 'Anarchy and Cooperation) to develop ways of calculating costs and benefits in such a way as to incorporate attitudes very similiar to a group ethic: for the group ethic is only irrational when it is analysed on the level of single actions by individuals. It is wholly rational to believe that the group ethic makes sense, and to use it to guide one's actions - as a rule of practice, that is - even if any single action taken by itself may appear to be not as profitable to a person as an alternative course which runs counter to or ignores such an ethic.

Consequently, the polarity between communal and associative relationships, which Weber adapted from Tonnies, is far less coherent than it first appeared to be (as is the whole rationalist enterprise itself - once we decide to start questioning it, we uncover more holes than a swiss cheese). We have criticized the dichotomy for assuming that no communal purpose can exist, and it is certainly untrue that all purposive organizations derive their purpose from an associative nature. It is now apparent that the very basis of taking 'subjective feelings of belonging' as being distinct from 'rationally motivated adjustment of interest' is unsound. It can be perfectly rational to have, or to cultivate, subjective feelings of belonging, and use them as a basis for what, by definition, would

be a communal but also a rational relationship. And our group ethic - the assumption that what benefits the individual is what works for the group - constitutes such a feeling of belonging. I' may be pointed out by diehard rationalists that one may act as if one had a feeling of belonging, for rational reasons, whereas nobody in fact has such a feeling at all. Or else it might be said that people who have mutual feelings of belonging are in fact being rational if they form an organization on that basis.

But neither of these objections is much to the point, let alone fatal. To act as if one had a feeling of belonging is indistinguishable from having such a feeling - Gilbert Ryle has made this point forcibly in a parallel context (The Concept of Mind) when he talks of the 'Ghost in the Machine'. Any sign of a difference in the two states which makes a difference is also a sign that one does not have such a feeling. Just as acting exactly like a human being is the same as being a human being. A difference that makes no difference is no difference at all. The second objection cited is identical to the point we are making - people who act on the basis of their feeling are not necessarily acting irrationally at all. Once more, feelings and reasons - rationales - are not polarities, merely two ways of looking at actions.

Now a subjective feeling of belonging together isn't necessarily the same as an assumption of group interests; a group of people standing together in a bus queue day after day can moan about the weather, swap news and opinions, notice that one of their regular number is missing and feel that they all belong together, without having an interest as a group. They could in no way be said to constitute a mutual-aid group of any sort. But when they all decide to sign petitions and march together to the Town Hall to demonstrate about the atrocious bus service, they could be said to have formed from those beginnings a mutual-aid group, by perceiving a common interest and then deciding to co-operate in acting together to do something about it. A feeling of belonging is thus not a sufficient condition for saying that a

mutual-aid group exists, but when it is combined with a perception of a common interest then it can lead to co-operative action. It is co-operating in such action that is another essential element in a mutual-aid group. Cooperative action is people acting together, acting mutually. We earlier defined a mutual-aid group as being an instance of purposive mutual action, and mutual in this instance can be regarded as synonymous with co-operative. Cooperative implies purpose, whilst mutual in itself does not, without in any way implying that the purpose is the most important thing around: an equal weight is given to the manner of action. Since we are concerned with mutual-aid organizations in any case this doesn't matter very much, for purpose is also implied in the word "organizations", which are by definition purposive. Together, co-operative action and a group ethic are two of the necessary conditions for forming, or denoting, a mutual-aid group.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ELEMENTS OF MUTUAL-AID GROUPS

We've now cleared up the main area of the second of our groups of jigsaw. As hoped, fitting the edges of the jigsaw together has effectively given us the outline of what goes in the middle, what a mutual-aid group must be like, and what some of the most important components in its workings need to be. They comprise three elements: mutual (co-operative) action, an assumption of group interest, together with a feeling of belonging. These three areas of action, belief and feeling are all interrelated and oughtn't really be looked at in isolation from each other. They constitute the pattern which we can identify and use in analysis of mutual-aid groups, and within a group the three areas reinforce each other. No one element should be considered more important than any other element, for within the group they derive much of their meaning and force from each other.

To elaborate this point further - I think it is quite possible for a group to include the elements of co-operative action, group interest and a feeling of belonging, and yet fail to be a mutual-aid group because the three elements are isolated from each other and form no pattern. A good example of this is a platoon of soldiers in action. There is usually some 'esprit de corps' generated under conditions of common danger, which we must equate with a feeling of belonging. There is also an assumption of group interest in that each soldier knows that what benefits the platoon is also likely to benefit him. The chances of survival are greatly increased by being part of a cohesive unit. Lastly, of course, the soldiers are also likely to co-operate in a variety of ways - not merely as ordered by the sergeant, but of their own free will. Yet these three areas are unlikely to relate to each other. The feeling of belonging does not create the perception of a group interest - the soldiers may hate each others' guts and still recognize that they stand a better chance as a group. And the interest of the group may well be better served by strategically retreating as a group rather than fighting as a group - the co-operative action they are involved in is independent from any decision the platoon might reach as to what would be best for them. And any mutual action that they do undertake - sharing cigarettes or whatever - is individually rather than organizationally oriented.

On the other hand we can imagine the same group of soldiers after their demobilization. The sense of solidarity and belonging built up by their wartime experiences remains, and they may perceive a common individual interest that they could better tackle as a group - they may all be unemployed, for instance. If that perception leads them to mutual and co-operative action - if on that basis they decide to work as a group - then they may well be a mutual-aid group. Notice that their perception of a common interest could lead them to adopt identical courses of individual action, such as all applying for a job in the same place. It is unlikely that this could be considered to be purposefully mutual,

as it leads not to further action but merely further acquaintance - they couldn't be said to have formed a mutual-aid group, as the group action is not defined properly, and thus lacks purpose. A series of identical actions by individuals doesn't add up to group action or group purpose even when they have caught the idea from each other. As Weber might have put it, they haven't oriented their activity towards the group, as a social construct, even though it may be oriented towards each other. Not all social activity has to occur in an organization.

The existence of a pattern in the actions, feelings and beliefs of mutual aid organizations is the most significant thing about them. They will tend to reinforce each other in most circumstances. Successful co-operative action reinforces the assumption of group interest by showing it is correct, as well as reinforcing feelings of belonging through mutually beneficial experiences. The assumption of group interest makes further planning of co-operative action possible, and also highly desirable, and the feeling of belonging acts as a kind of emotional cement. It is the interrelationship, the pattern of these elements which is powerful - the feelings generate the belief, the beliefs lead to action, and action reinforces both beliefs and feelings. It is to this pattern of social behaviour that we direct our attention in the future.

People have often commented on the ability of voluntaristic organizations generally to innovate and respond to changing circumstances. This ability is a result of the fact that the orientation of the organization isn't to a fixed goal, but to the values and group identity and ethic which are at its base. The group looks at itself reflexively, for unless it is transforming those values into some realization of their implications, the group will fold. This is what is remarkable, and desirable, about mutual-aid groups, and this is why we have to look at the ways that people communicate values and value-related matters to each other in mutual-aid groups.

CHAPTER SEVEN

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HABERMAS AND THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

The influence of Habermas on the critique of rationality and other areas we've touched on earlier is probably deeper than I realize. Certainly, Habermas hasn't been quoted as a source, but this is because I'm not at all sure that I understand his writings - which are admittedly rather dense - and am therefore liable to render a disservice by quoting out of context. Especially in the development of the theory of communicative competence, Habermas comes close to the arguments developed here from different directions. It was only when I had come to my own appreciation of how important that the issues Habermas deals with are, and developed my own route towards similiar conclusions, that I began to think I understood him. In that process, an unconscious understanding of what I had failed to comprehend was probably one of the things making it possible.

As an illustration of this, compare the following quotation with the discussion of Olson's logic of collective action in the last chapter.

> "We can start from the position that the orientation of action towards institutionalized values is unproblematic only as long as the normatively prescribed distribution of opportunities for the legitimate satisfaction of needs rests on actual consensus. But as soon as a difference of opinion arises, the 'injustice' of the repression of generalizable interests can be

> recognized in the categories of the interpretive system operating at the time. This consciousness of conflicts of interests is, as a rule, sufficient motive for replacing value-oriented action with interest-guided action. The pattern of communicative action gives way then, in politically relevant domains of behaviour, to that type of behaviour for which the competition for scarce goods supplies the model, that is, strategic action."
> ('Legitimation Crisis',p.113)

If we regard our group ethic and feelings of belonging in mutual-aid groups as an 'institutionalized value', and as an instance of 'repression of generalized interest' we can see that the parallel is clear, though we have connected up the strength of the institutionalized values as a means of repressing interest-guided action in a mutual-aid group. It is perhaps notable that Habermas has also found it necessary to question the nature of rationality on his own route to the same area which we concern ourselves with. In any event, the theories of communication developed by Habermas are decidedly anarchist in their implications and anti-authoritarian in their essence.

The parallels with the ideas of Habermas is rooted in the basics of his work. One of his fundamental distinctions is between work and interaction, or communicative action.

> "By work, ... I understand either instrumental action or rational choice or their conjunction. Instrumental action is governed by technical rules ..... symbolic interaction ..... is governed by binding consensual norms, which define reciprocal expectations about behaviour, and which must

> be understood and recognized by two acting subjects ..... the validity of technical rules and strategies depends on that of empirically true or analytically correct propositions, the validity of social norms is grounded only in the intersubjectivity of the mutual understanding of intentions and secured by the general recognition of obligations."
> ('Technology and science as Ideology' in 'Towards a Rational Society', pp.91-92)

We can note in passing the similiarity of the points Habermas makes about rules, which so clearly are another case of the ambiguities discussed in the last chapter.

> "Violation of a rule has a different consequence according to type. Incompetent behaviour, which violates valid technical rules or strategies, is condemned per se to failure through lack of success ..... Deviant behaviour, which violates consensual norms, provoke sanctions that are connected with the rules only externally, that is by convention."
> (ibid)

SYSTEMATICALLY DISTORTED COMMUNICATION

Having established the difference between work and communicative action, we can then bring in Habermas' idea of distorted communication. He takes J.L.Austin's outline of the difference between perlocutionary and illocutionary utterances as a first step in this. Austin called the latter 'performatories', and Searle calls them 'speech acts' - the illocutionary content of an utterance is the extent to which one does something in saying something, as Austin put it. Promising, betting, taking oaths,

announcing are examples of verbs with the intentional performatory content we take as distinguishing illocutionary utterances from the perlocutionary, or merely communicative. It is the illocutionary force of utterances which distorts communication (at least in my understanding of Habermas). When we are talking to someone not with the intention of just communicating, but with a specific purpose, in which the utterances are instrumental, then the distinction between 'work' and 'interaction' is blurred, and communication becomes distorted. We are not able to communicate in such a situation because the interaction is partly purposive, and is therefore work. The content and meaning of the words becomes distorted by the social work we do in uttering them.

I'll give examples to make this clearer. When two people, one of whom has power over the other, talk together, the communication is distorted because the person with the power will say things that the other will take as recommendations, or orders, or criticisms. Even if there is a conscious effort to avoid such performatories, the person in the subordinate position will always have to listen for them, and avoid uttering any of their own. And thus communication between the two parties - pure communicative interaction - will be systematically distorted by the power relationships involved.

The same applies, more topically, to discussion of a submitted thesis with examiners. Communication about content is virtually impossible - the idea is to defend the thesis, not to talk about it. And if during the course of such a defence a communication becomes necessary (due to a misinterpretation perhaps) the examiner has to disentangle defence and justification from a genuine communication about actual content. As Mandy Rice-Davies once put it 'He would say that, wouldn't he?". Where we can think that to ourselves we have another instance of distorted communication.

Now there's nothing wrong with work-type interaction, utterances with mostly purposive content. They are an integral and essential part of human life. It is about the circumstances under which true communication becomes both essential and impossible that genuine worries arise. Where all communication is systematically distorted, no consensual norms can be established, and the possibility of value-oriented action is nil since values cannot be agreed on. The arms race, and disarmament or arms limitation negotiations, are an exemplary instance. Communication is impossible between the USSR and USA because anything either says to the other is suspect in that the listener will always be looking for purposive content - asking not what the other side is saying but what they are doing in what they are saying. This even extends to critics of the nuclear arms race, who are always being called, in Britain, communist tools or even accused of receiving Soviet financial aid. So all communication is systematically distorted, and no communicative interaction is possible. But without it, there is no possibility of breaking out of the context altogether. The fact is that the two sides cannot sit down and talk their way out of the road to mutual annihilation because they cannot see such talking as anything else than a part of the arms race itself.

For mutual-aid groups, the ability to communicate properly is essential because a mutual-aid group rests, as we have seen, on feelings of belonging, co-operative action and an assumption of group interest. In Habermas' terms, as we saw in the first quotation above, it is value-oriented action, and the establishment of such values is impossible if all communication is distorted, and more importantly, impossible to maintain if the truth underlying those values ever becomes suspect. The 'suppression of generalizable interest' depends on the assurance of intersubjective value assumptions. Thus a group where all communication is systematically distorted cannot be a mutual-aid group, as values cannot be established and maintained.

Even if they don't know the theory, most aspiring mutual-aid groups realize intuitively that they must be able to communicate without distortion. And the power relationships between individuals are the usual things which they assume distort communication, and these are seen as embodied in formal structures involving authority, leaders and so on. The tendency towards lack of these structures in mutual-aid groups is attributable to the realization that the inevitability of systematically distorted communication in such a structure makes the maintenance of the value-base of the group virtually impossible to assure. Before we look at Habermas' own thoughts on how to establish communicative interaction without distortion, let us look at some of the results of assuming an unstructured group is the solution.

ON THE TYRANNY OF STRUCTURELESSNESS

Most of the work on this subject has been done within the modern Women's Liberation movement. The fact that modern feminist groups maintain their common interest as women in society, act co-operatively on many levels, and believe that they are better off acting together than they are in isolation makes them mutual-aid groups. The network of feminist groups influenced by the womens' movement today embraces social service groups, political pressure groups, businesses, media and so on. An enormous amount of work on organizational theory has emerged from the last decade and a half during which all this has been building up, and I have no intention of reviewing all the material available. But there are a few crucial pieces of literature we ought to examine because of the light they can shed on the strategy of structureless and leaderless groups as a device for ensuring non-distorted communication and equality.

Certainly one of the best-known of the feminist writings on organization is 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', by Jo Freeman. I've used the pamphlet edition published by the Hull

AWA, which says that the piece was written in 1970 in the USA and later reprinted in the Berkeley Journal of Sociology. The essential point of the article is that

> "Women had thoroughly accepted the idea of structurelessness without realising the limitations of its uses. People would try to use the 'structureless' group and the informal conference for purposes for which they were unsuitable out of a blind belief that no other means could be anything other than oppressive. If the movement is to move beyond these elementary stages of development, it will have to disabuse itself of some of its prejudices about organization and structure. There is nothing inherently bad about either of these ..... we need to understand why 'structurelessness' does not work."
> (Jo Freeman,'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', op.cit.)

She goes on to say that there is in fact no such thing as a structureless group in any case, so the attempt to build one is deceptive. Informal structures will always exists and in a supposedly unstructured group, form the basis for elites. Freeman defines an elite as a small group which has

> "power over a larger group of which they are a part, usually without direct responsibility to that group and often without their knowledge and consent..... intelligent elitists are usually smart enough not to allow themselves to be well-known. When they become known, they are watched, and the mask over their power is no longer firmly lodged."

And as she goes on to point out, if a group believes it is a structureless one, there can be no structures for either recognizing an elite or limiting the power elites wield. So once the naive idea of structurelessness as a means of ensuring equality, democracy and undistorted communicative action is adopted, it not only fosters a more insidious kind of power structure, but also limits its ability to do anything about it.

The second detrimental effect of structurelessness as an ideology is that it leads to what Freeman calls the 'star' system, whereby the lack of a formal mechanism for contacts with the outside world, especially the media, pushes some people into 'star' roles whereby they speak for the whole group, but once again the group has no control over their activities. This leads to resentment and 'purges', which leave the 'star' even freer to act individualistically.

The last of the pernicious effects of structurelessness is the fact that the group, even if it can communicate freely, can't actually do anything properly within the group, and so people committed to action have to leave if they are ever to put ideas into practise. This opens up a veritable can of worms. Freeman writes -

> "The desire for meaningful political activity generated ..... is sufficient to make them eager to join other organizations. The movement itself provides no outlets for their new ideas and energies..... Because these women share common values, ideas and political orientation they too become informal, unplanned, unselected, unresponsible elites - whether they intend to be so or not. These new informal elites are often perceived as threats by the old informal elites previously developed within different movement networks,

> This is a correct perception ..... the old elites are rarely willing to bring such differences of opinion out into the open because it would involve exposing the nature of the informal structure of the group. Many of these informal elites have been hiding under the banner of 'anti-elitism' and 'structurelessness'."

This leads to either purges or institutionalising some sort of power structure, essentially a takeover by one particular group. On the larger level, where anarchists would create federations, Freeman points out that only nationally organized groups can coordinate national actions, and unstructured groups are capable of supporting such national actions but are incapable of mounting their own. She concludes that local, regional and national organizational structures are a necessity for the Women's Liberation movement. The pamphlet concludes with seven recommendations, or 'Principles of Democratic Structuring'.

These are intended to be 'kept in mind' rather that recited as a catechism. They are first, delegation of specific tasks to specific people, and secondly, requiring all those who have been so delegated to be responsible to the group. Thirdly, all such authority should be distributed as widely as possible. Fourthly, Freeman recommends rotation of tasks to avoid responsibilities becoming personal properties. Fifth, allocation of tasks should be along rational criteria - "ability, interest and responsibility have got to be the major concerns". Sixth, diffusion of information to everybody as frequently as possible, and lastly, the complementary recommendation of equality of access to resources within a group.

REDSTOCKINGS AND THE FEMINIST REVOLUTION

As a critique of the naive idea of structurelessness, Jo Freeman's article is unsurpassed. However, she touched on one area which makes the suggested recommendations as well as the analysis itself slightly more problematical. The key sentence is where she talks about elites 'hiding under the banner' of non-structurelessness and leaderlessness. In other words, discussion of structure in a group may be less fruitful if it is distorted communication in the first place. In different words, the point is forcefully made in the Redstockings collection, 'Feminist Revolution'. The anthology is certainly the most stimulating book on voluntaristic organizing I have ever read. To put the book in some sort of context, I'll quote Robin Morgan on the early history of the Women's Liberation Movement in the USA.

> "After the first Miss America demonstration, NYRW (New York Radical Women) meetings were attended by more women than we could handle ..... so we decided to split up into small groups, coming together in the umbrella group once a month for information exchanges, business meetings and continued communication. The splits were actually political divisions though. Out of this mitosis came Redstockings, founded by those women who declared themselves radical feminists ..... they went about doing steady consciousness-raising and writing papers which were destined to become new feminist classics."
> (Robin Morgan, 'Going Too Far', p.71)

The Redstockings women back in 1968 included most of the pioneer theoreticians of the movement, who were responsible for many of the key concepts and phrases, from consciousness-raising theory to slogans, even including the very word 'sexism'. That the

original group was both innovative and influential there can be no doubt, and that they were the inspiration for much of the subsequent flowering of the women's movement is equally apparent. But the larger part of the contemporary women's movement has, according to the Redstockings anthology, become institutionalised and absorbed by the very social structure that the early activists were trying to change. Whether or not the process - of incorporation perhaps - was inevitable is beside the point. A large part of 'Feminist Revolution' concerns the efforts of the remainder of the Redstockings group to analyse and pinpoint exactly how and why the movement went the way it did, and how their original ideas of feminist revolution were (as they see it) lost along the way. As such, it is one perspective on a unique record of dynamic organizational change by some of those deeply affected by it.

One of the key elements identified as making the transformation of the movement possible was the ideology of leaderlessness. Firstly, it made possible the rewriting of history.

> "History, after all, is about what was done and who did it and what was important and how it was accomplished. And who does things and how it is accomplished is all about leadership. There was a conflict between promoting history ..... and the movement's ideology of leaderlessness. ..... The loss of the movement's history, both recent and past, is now a key problem which is stopping its momentum."
> (Kathy Sarachild (Amatniek), 'The power of History', in 'Feminist Revolution' p.28)

If one has an ideology of leaderlessness, then individual contributions are either unrecorded or placed in a context where their contributors are negated. As Kathy Sarachild wrote elsewhere, "I remember seeing myself referred to ..... as if I was dead." (She was one of the original theoreticians of feminist consciousness-raising and was still active and working at the time: to be valued only as a historical figure would appear to deny the value of present and future work).

Secondly, and more importantly perhaps, is the point that the ideology of leaderlessness was used by some women to enable them to oust the radical women who were in the vanguard of the movement as a whole. Simply, structural issues were used to great effect as weapons against the existing leaders in the movement.

> "Two kinds of leadership emerged in the group: 1) Straightforward people who became leaders by putting their politics out in the open and fighting for them. 2) sneaky 'anti-leaders' who shouted loudest against leadership, but maneuvered quietly to push the group in their direction by withholding information, not telling their politics, and leading personality assassinations on those who did speak up honestly. Ironically, women have become leaders fighting for the principle that there should be no leaders."
> ('The Liberal Takeover of Women's Liberation', Carol Hanisch, in 'Feminist Revolution' op.cit. p.129)

Essentially, the point is that structural discussion doesn't occur in a vacuum, and discussions about organization are just as liable to be distorted communications as any other type. And the other side of this coin is that even when a communication genuinely is undistorted on the part of the person doing the

talking, it may be open to distorted interpretation by listeners or those who interpret on their behalf. Additionally, the possibility offered for writing individual contributions out of history makes for even more distortion, because history is one of the major tools of analysis. And if the possibilities for analysis are restricted, even more distortion is inevitable.

It would be as well to remember that the original Catch-22 was about systematically distorted communication. You could be sent home from the war if you were mad, but if you asked to be sent home you couldn't possibly be anything but sane. And if you didn't ask, you had to stay in any case.

THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

So we have seen that the presumption that leaderlessness and structurelessness will be a guarantee of equality, freedom and the opportunity to communicate properly about values is as far from the truth as it could possibly be. We return now to see what Habermas has to say on the subject. He recognizes the two-way nature of the problem.

> "In an interaction that links at least two subjects in the framework of an intersubjectivity of mutual understanding produced in ordinary language through constant meanings, the interpreter is as much a participant as the one he interprets. The relation of observing subject and object is replaced here by that of participant subject and partner. Experience is mediated by the interaction of both participants; understanding is communicative experience. Its objectivity is thus threatened from both sides: by the influence of the interpreter, whose engaged subjectivity distorts the

> answers, no less than by the reactions of the other, who disconcerts a participant observer."
> (Habermas, 'Knowledge and Human interests', p.180)

This is admittedly heavy stuff to digest. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that undistorted communicative action is impossible to guarantee. Indeed, Habermas himself states that

> "communicative competence relates to an ideal speech situation ..... The dialogue-constitutive universals at the same time generate and describe the form of intersubjectivity which makes the mutuality of understanding possible. Communicative competence is defined by the ideal speaker's mastery of the dialogue-constitutive universals irrespective of the actual restrictions under empirical conditions. We shall disregard to which extent the motivations of actions involved in the language games are linguistically organized on the level of intentionality and consequently open to public communication. We shall disregard whether and to what extent systematically distorted communication does take place."
> ('Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence' in 'Recent Sociology No.2' ed. Dreitzel)

The fact that we have to define communicative competence as ideal-typical is not much help if this means it cannot exist in practice. However, Habermas goes on to analyse the barriers to an ideal form of communication, and comes up with three fundamental differentiations in any illocutionary, and potentially distorting utterance, and his subsequent comments resolve the situation.

> "a) Being and appearance ... every speech implies the claim of inducing consensus on that which really is distinguished from that which only appears to be..... This presupposes a differentiation between a public world of intersubjectively acknowledged interpretations and a private world of sole feelings and impressions.
>
> b) Being and essence ..... in every speech the subjects ..... unavoidably express their own selves ..... This presupposes a differentiation between a communication on objects and a metacommunication on the level of subjectivity.
>
> c) Being and ought to be ..... every speech act exists in a context of actions and intentions ..... according to valid norms. This presupposes the differentiation between valid rules ..... intentionally followed ..... and regularities of observable events.
>
> If one analyses the structure we generate ..... one arrives at a number of symmetrical relations ..... An unlimited interchangeability of dialogue roles demands that no side be privileged in the performance of these roles: pure intersubjectivity exists only when there is complete symmetry in the

> distribution ..... As long as these symmetries exist, communication will not be hindered .....These three symmetries represent .... truth, freedom and justice..... communicative competence does mean the mastery of the means of construction necessary for the establishment of an ideal speech situation." (op.cit,pp.142-144)

To paraphrase the above, and summarize it, the exclusion of systematically distorted communication is possible only when people are able to incorporate the linguistic equivalents of truth, freedom and justice into their discourse, and are able to give other people an equal chance for self-expression as they have themselves. In such a case, pure intersubjectivity of concepts, which is at the basis of discussions of values, is assured. Symmetry, or reciprocation, is the key to this. As long as we are either feeling that our chances of expressing certain views in a conversation are less than another participant's, or are not prepared to allow someone else freedom to say what they want, then our conversation is systematically distorted, and not only will we fail to reach consensus on truth, but freedom and justice will be absent too. To put a different way, the illocutionary force the participants can wield cancel each other out, and the most rational argument wins the discussion.

Although this is an ideal-typical theory, there is in fact a clear guide to action here. We have seen that the attempt to maintain values by ensuring communicative competence through structurelessness is misconceived in theory and misapplied in practice. The way suggested by Habermas to ensure undistorted communication would seem to be by maintaining a structure which was democratic in the sense that it attempted to ensure that all have an equal say in discussions. That this can't be interpreted in the sense of giving everyone an opportunity or the time to speak is obvious - that is no assurance of symmetry in speech

acts. The repercussions extend in every direction. Resentment and ignorance are as much a barrier as status or power. To the extent that each one of us can anticipate asymmetry in discussions, we have the ability to perceive distorted communication. Once perceived, we have the power to expose it and remedy the inequalities. That this requires a structure rather than no structure is obvious enough. The structure must be an equalizing one and a democratic one.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

So how is all this relevant to an organization which wants to survive as a mutual-aid group? The answer is that they have to maintain a basis of feelings of belonging and group interest. To do this successfully requires the ability to communicate about values, and this can only be done properly if the communication is not distorted. (For if it is, the basis of the group will not be maintained). The touchstone of non-distorted communication, of communicative competence, is the symmetry of chances to perform illocutionary utterances in the conversation. These take three possible forms - statements about truth (I think, I know, I doubt), statements about freedom (I expose, I deny, I will) and statements about justice (I accept, I allow, I obey). As long as the members are not equally likely to perform any of the speech acts, there is no guarantee of non-distorted communication, and consequently the group will not be able to reflexively maintain the values, beliefs and attitudes essential to its survival.

Habermas' linguistic equivalences of truth, freedom and justice were admittedly difficult to understand. Perhaps it is a good idea to recapitulate in our own words rather than in his own. The three concepts all are mediated by speech acts. Inasmuch as we assert or deny the truth in speech, exercise our freedom in our statements, and signify what we think is fair verbally, the linguistic equivalences are the expressions of our ideas about truth, freedom and justice. Now the important thing about truth,

justice and freedom is that if they exist at all, they apply universally to all people.Habermas maintains that all illocutionary actions are related to one or other concept, and once we grant that the illocutionary content of what we say is the cause of our distorted communications, the conclusion that it is institutionalized inequalities of truth, freedom and justice which lead to systematically distorted communications is one which follows logically. Since speech is an interaction, symmetry of opportunities to make illocutionary utterances is a demonstration of the universality in the concepts.

In a cosmic sense, I find this highly gratifying. The fact that communicative competence, or the ability to talk rationally about the values at the basis of a mutual-aid group, is a necessary condition to its survival, would seem to indicate that mutual-aid groups are somehow an embodiment of the virtues of truth, freedom and justice. As an anarchist, I find this equally gratifying. Freedom and justice have always been at the centre of anarchist thought. And from the point of view of social scientists, the incorporation of previously non-instrumental values into social science in a way which means that they can be seen to be useful rather than merely desirable is no bad thing. Habermas has always been one of those who regarded the value-freedom of science to be impossible. Now that we can relate truth to both freedom and justice, we can see good reason for regarding with suspicion the notion of value-freedom as either desirable or possible.

In this chapter we have established, via the theory of communicative competence, that our conception of a voluntarist organization doesn't mean simply the absence of coercion, but the institutionalization of equality as well. That this isn't a contradiction in terms we established from looking at the writings from the women's movement on the problems inherent in structureless and leaderless groups - true symmetry and equality has to be established and maintained. We have seen at least one set of proposals (from Jo Freeman) as to how this can be done.

But before we continue with our analysis of anarchist organizational form, it is essential to return to a critique of rationalist organization theory in order to establish that the most common framework for analysing mutual aid groups and voluntary organizations is unduly pessimistic in outlook and largely misconceived in principle. The main purpose of this part of the thesis is to show how mutual-aid as a coherent organizational strategy is possible. As a part of this task, we have to destroy the theoretical basis for the assumption that anarchist organizational form is either impossible or unstable. We finish that task in the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

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PARADIGMS OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION: OLIGARCHY

If there is a paradigm of voluntary organizations and mutual-aid groups which is recognized at all, it is based on the twin principles of oligarchy and routinization. To quote one author -

> "As organizations which lack any formal capacity to control their members, precisely because they are 'volunteers', voluntary organizations appear to be the least bureaucratic of all organizational forms. Yet over time ..... the organization develops more rigid structures and becomes, in the end, detached from its ordinary membership base..... From the initial informal stage, a membership division of labour, executive and staff functions emerges. Eventually a distinct administrative body develops, membership groups appoint delegates for purposes of representation, standing committees are set up and there are problems of communication ..... the organization creates more and more rules and procedures to conduct its business. The executive becomes detached from the everyday life of the organization. There are constant attempts to solve the communication problem. And, most important of all, the rank and file

> membership become increasingly passive and removed from the main areas of decision-making."
> (Gilbert Smith, 'Social Work and the Sociology of Organizations",p.105-106)

Both principles, of the development of an oligarchy and of the routinization of the group, are in evidence here. The two principles both have a classical pedigree. The first principle, as enshrined in Michel's Iron Law of Oligarchy, supposedly proves that any organization inevitably ends up with power in the hands of a small elite. The second principle has an equally respectable theoretical origin (at least in so far as it derives from Weber's writings on the routinization of charisma) and supposedly states that with time, any organization will become a part of the establishment it was set up as an alternative to. Both principles reinforce each other, since oligarchy is one of the things which leads to routinization, and the establishment (on a conspiracy theory) uses fostering of elites as one of its tools. Both principles are untrue. There is a large element of tautology in both, and an equally amount of invalid generalization from particular cases to types to global laws. The kernel of truth both contain isn't a truth about people, or about organizations, or about mutual aid at all, but a truth about a particular political and social system. Whether it is possible for people and the groups they form to step out, in a sense, from their social and political background and follow a different line is a different question entirely, and is one of fact and possibility rather than theory. We shall get into facts later: for now, we begin with the theory of oligarchy.

OLIGARCHY

In its original meaning, oligarchy is simply rule by few over many. Lipset defines Oligarchy as "control of a society or an organization by those at the top", in his introduction to the 1962 Free Press edition of Michel's 'Political Parties'. This definition appears to make sense but is in fact rather muddled. To the extent that we would define the top of an organization as where the control lies, it is tautological - part of the definition of organization, no doubt, according to many, is that some people must control. Since they are defined as being at the top, organization equals oligarchy. The tautology is built into the muddles, of which there are three. The first muddle is the lack of a definition of an organization or of a society. The second muddle is the circularity of the idea of a 'top' which is a central part of it, as explained above. These two muddles make room for the most serious, which disguises the first two and exploits them with its own ambiguities.

The last muddle is that power and control are not distinguished. It is axiomatic that a large number of people cannot effectively and efficiently run a society if they hold a plebiscite on every single issue from defence to the colour of the toilet paper. Delegation is always used in practice in every social organism. The issue is not one of control but of accountability in a democracy. There may be two types of accountability which those 'in control' owe to those they supposedly control. They may be representatives or they may be delegates. In the first case, their actions are not subject to the approval of those they represent, except in a most general way. The only sanction the people represented have is to find a new representative. This is called representative democracy, and is what has been prevalent in Britain for centuries. The actions of delegates are subject to the approval of the people who delegated them. If they don't like the actions then they can overturn them. The delegate has no power to decide. In cases where delegates have no idea of what the people want, they have to come to informed guesses, and their decisions are subject to

ratification of some sort. Both types of controllers are presumably acting in good faith. But the good faith of a representative lies in actions and decisions, and a representative can in good faith decide to act differently from the wishes of the people, whereas the good faith of delegates lie in the extent to which they anticipate and carry out the wishes of the people who chose them.

The two types of accountability in a participatory or representative democracy (as the two systems described above are usually called) have different implications for control. The existence of delegates or representatives has different implications. Using Weber's definition of power as the ability to impose one's will on others despite their resistance, it is clear that delegation doesn't imply this ability to anything like the extent that representation does - in theory delegation makes power of the delegates over their people impossible. Coordination and leadership functions may lie with the delegates, but their control isn't the same sort of control as representatives have, and this isn't taken into account in the definition. Power is what oligarchy is about, not control. (That this leaves out bureaucracies is unimportant - unless one wants an iron law of bureaucracy.)

Our own definition of an oligarchy shall be as a closed group which has power over a larger group of which it is nominally part, and which uses its power to maintain its position. We wouldn't regard an open group as an oligarchy unless it somehow maintained mechanisms to discourage others from wanting to join. In this case its openness would be questionable. We also ought to make clear again that this discussion is value-based in that oligarchy is regarded as a problem, and we have the intention of exploding the theory of its inevitability. In so far as we have seen that communicative competence and the establishment and maintenance of the value basis of mutual-aid groups demands equality, this has a logical basis also. It is necessary to our purpose here. Lipset also says that

> "surveys of the internal life of voluntary organizations ..... have yielded evidence to support the iron law of oligarchy."
> (op.cit. p.22)

Defining oligarchy as a problem presupposes a solution can be found.

THE IRON LAW

What then is the iron law of oligarchy ? It was put forward by Roberto Michels in his book 'Political Parties': references are to the 1962 Free Press edition already cited. Michels states that "who says organization, says oligarchy". 'Political Parties' remains the classic work on oligarchies, and its thesis is that any organization will inevitably drift into a state whereby a self perpetuating elite control the organization in their own interests. Michels reached his conclusions largely on the basis of the socialist parties of Europe up to the time he wrote the book (1915), and subsequent events not only appear to have proved him correct in his analysis in almost every case, but have also resulted in the acceptance of the thesis he presents as being an 'Iron Law' indeed. The only qualifications noted by Lipset (following Mills and Galbraith) involve the need to take account of competing elites and also the needs for legitimacy of democratic systems leading to less blatant self-interest being pursued by the oligarchy than would be the case in a totally unfettered dictatorship.

Michels rests his case on what is basically a two-stage argument. He says firstly that "leadership is a necessary consequence in every form of social life" (op.cit. p.364). The second step in the argument is Michels' establishing the necessity of strong leadership for successful organization, from which he goes on to show that the leaders become a self-

perpetuating elite, that "from a means, organization will become an end" (ibid.p.338). The argument he makes is flawed for reasons which anyone closely following the way we have treated similiar arguments should by now be able to work out for themselves. Of the various criticisms, the major one is that the first stage of Michel's argument is incomplete, probably incorrect, and begs the question. This isn't to deny the value of Michel's work in relation to political parties from the theoretical and empirical point of view, for 'Political Parties' is still essential reading for students of political organization today, and has proved itself a fruitful source of inspiration. The status of the book as a modern classic doesn't make the iron law of oligarchy true as it was formulated there and as it is often used today. It remains an empirical generalization, based on a very limited set of samples (though fairly comprehensive within that set) with a primarily tautological base.

An invalid assumption is made at the very beginning of Michel's argument as to the causes of leadership, and it concerns the nature of organization. He states that

> "a class which unfurls in the face of society the banner of certain definite claims ..... needs an organization. Organization appears the only means for the creation of a collective will."
> (p.61)

He then goes on to say that

> "Organization based on the principle of least effort ..... is the weapon of the weak in their struggle with the strong."
> (ibid).

It is not a pedantic quibble to point out that if a class has already unfurled its banner of definite claims, it has created a 'collective will' of some sort prior to its 'organization'. The idea that people need organizing in order to find out what they want not only flies in the face of the common sense notion that peple organize to achieve their will, not to create it, but is also contradicted by the earlier implication that it is belonging to a class which leads to the claims that people make. It also leads to a logically infinite regression, for if people need to organize to find out what they want, they need to organize to find out that what they want is to organize, and therefore need to organize to find out that they need to organize to find out that what they want is to organize (.....und so weiter, ja ?) We are actually dealing here with the myth of the revolutionary vanguard which has to organize the masses, a belief which derives from marxist orthodoxy. In fact most popular revolutions have begun despite organizations organizing them rather than because of them - Michel's own iron law applied in its proper sphere of political parties shows this to be the case. And the major weapon has been spontaneous action and numbers, not organization based on the principle of least effort - that isn't revolution but a coup d'etat. In short, Michels assumes that it is organization which creates the will of its members, whereas the reverse is true - it is the will that creates organization.

We saw this in our own analysis of mutual-aid groups. In the beginning there was the need, and this led to common interests and mutual feelings of belonging bringing forth co-operative action, and mutualistic organization. The organization is formed to fulfil the will of the members, not to create the will. The will arises from need. As Shevek said (in Le Guin's 'The Dispossessed') "It is suffering that brings us together". So Michel's statement that organization is necessary to the creation of a collective will is logically impossible, politically suspect, and factually incorrect.

It follows that a theory with such an assumption at its base is unlikely to be a good one, though a correct theory can be reached through false facts, incorrect assumptions and faulty reasoning. A true statement is logically implied by any false statement, surprising though it may seem. We do not establish that the iron law of oligarchy is incorrect by showing it was arrived at by faulty reasoning, but we do destroy a lot of its force as a working hypothesis.

The second error which Michels makes concerned his repeated references to phenomena such as the "apathy of the masses" (op.cit.,p.86) and the "incompetence of the masses" (p.111 and p.165). Certainly it is true that most members were only passive participants in the organizations he describes, but as he so correctly points out, those organizations served the interests of the leaders, and not of the members themselves. It would have been more incompetent to have joined in. Therefore to abstain from participation in an organization which isn't acting in your interests is no proof of apathy or incompetence.

More serious in this connection is the charge that this alleged incompetence and apathy indicates the need for leadership. Michels entitled one of his chapters, chapter 2 of section one,(b), 'The need for leadership felt by the masses'. The main argument in support of this need is the indifference shown by most people for most of their institutions. To presume this indicates a need for leadership is guesswork, and the fact that leaders arise to fill a vacuum is no indication either that they have popular support. The techniques of opinion polling would have resolved this question empirically, but they weren't available to Michels. To my knowledge, nobody has actually tried to find out empirically if apathy does indicate a felt need for leadership, but I suspect that the results wouldn't support Michels' thesis. In view of the fact that the political institutions in the countries Michels cites were invariably designed to facilitate the emergence of an elite, it is hardly surprising in any case that most people saw no need for

participation. Applying Occam's razor, we can see that there is no need to suppose any predisposition for leadership, since they couldn't really do much else. Michels actually does point this out when he writes about parliamentarianism later on, but fails to realize that the implications serve only to undermine his generalizations about the need for leadership.

Michels also states that

> "the most striking proof of the organic weakness of the mass is furnished by the way in which, when deprived of their leaders in time of action, they abandon the field of battle in disordered flight; they seem to have no power of instinctive reorganization, and are useless until new captains arise capable of replacing those that have been lost. The failure of innumerable strikes and political agitations is explained very simply by the opportune action of the authorities, who have placed the leaders under lock and key."
> (op.cit. p.90)

Surely, in view of all we have argued up till now, the susceptibility of an organization with leaders to disintegration when it loses them is attributable to the weakness of that form of organization, not to any inherent defect on the part of its members. Far from being the most striking evidence of organic weakness of the masses, this is surely the most striking argument for adopting an organizational form in which there are no leaders indispensable for action. The history of the C.N.T shows that basing a mass organization on federations of autonomous groups denies the authorities the type of action cited above. The same considerations apply to all the other arguments from existing cases used to support Michels' case: they serve as indictments of the organizational form rather than of the members.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY

The elitist assumptions built into the theory, which pervade Michels' book, would necessarily lead to oligarchy - as we have pointed out, there is a direct logical relationship between oligarchical theories and elitist ideologies. The whole book is full of circularities of this sort. For instance, Michels presents "The cult of veneration amongst the Masses" (Chapter 5 in part 1B) as one of the causes of leadership in an organization: and then presents "Bonapartist Ideology" (Chapter 2 in part 3) and "Le Parti c'est Moi" (Chapter 3 in part 3) as results of advanced states of oligarchy, when they are clearly a part of the cult of leadership which he elsewhere cites as a cause. In other words, if Michels wished to present the emergence of oligarchy as a consequence of the veneration of leadership, he cannot also get away with citing other aspects of this veneration as a cause of oligarchy too.

Consequently, the argument for oligarchy presented by Michels is simply not strong enough. There is no reason to suppose that individual leaders are necessary for the continuation or administration of an organization, or for its formation in the first place. And consequently there is no reason to suppose that a non-authoritarian organization without an oligarchical leadership to wield power shouldn't present a viable alternative to the pessimistic picture painted by him. The anarchists, of course, denied the necessity of centralised and coercive authority to an organization. Michels' dismissal of the anarchist alternative is one of the weakest parts of the whole book. In one place he commits the popular error of supposing that anarchists

> "are the declared enemies of all organizations, and who, when they form their own organizations, do so in defiance of their

own principles."
(p.109)

If we have learnt anything about anarchism, it is that there is a coherent if incomplete tradition of anarchist organizational writing and practise, from Proudhon through Kropotkin to the Spanish anarchists, and beyond them to anarchist-influenced movements like the Committee of 100 and CND, the New Left of the 1960's, with a direct link to community action and political groups of today. Michels, in common with many people, failed to appreciate that the insistence on the possibilities of non-authoritarian organization is in its way the central concept of the anarchist alternative. I make no apology for repeating the very same quotation from Malatesta that appeared in our first discussion of anarchism.

> "Were we to believe that organization was not possible without authority we would be authoritarians because we would still prefer authority, which fetters and impoverishes life, to disorganization, which makes life impossible."
> (op.cit)

Michels even cites Malatesta as saying that it was essential to counter the powerful organization of the rich by a still more powerful organization of the poor, and claims this manifested symptoms of the mentality of leaders of authoritarian parties. If he had ever read what Malatesta wrote, it would have been obvious that it was an entirely different kind of organization which was being talked about - not a political party. We can only conclude that Michels' dismissal of the anarchist alternatives to oligarchical organization was based on either ignorance, misunderstanding or misrepresentation.

Though we can refute Michels' thesis on the inevitability of oligarchy, that part of his argument which concerns the effects of leadership and the internal dynamics of organizations still poses genuine problems which though they can be dealt with in a non-authoritarian framework, are real rather than imaginary. Emma Goldman said that "Anarchism is the great liberator of man from the phantoms that have held him captive" ('Anarchism and other Essays', p.53), but this doesn't mean that, in Michels' words, humanity finds it easy "to emancipate itself psychically from the social environment in which it lives" (op.cit.p.271). The accumulation of specialist skills and knowledge in the hands of a few: the inequality of access to means of communication: the differences in ability to handle the complexities of the state apparatus: the dangers involved in specializations: all these are problems raised by Michels which we have seen to be valid ones in our earlier discussions, even if it is untrue that oligarchy is inevitable. Avoiding bureaucracy, problems of delegation and the socialization of new members also have to be dealt with, if oligarchical tendencies are to be nipped in the bud. The difference lies in the fact that given the proper framework, these phenomena which appeared to Michels as proof of his thesis, are reduced to their proper size and are simply problems to be overcome. There is no doubt that the awareness of the need for solutions already exists, and the techniques are being developed. We've already seen these under development in the 'Tyranny of Structurelessness' by Jo Freeman, and a more encyclopeadic treatment is given by Martin Jelfs in his 'Manual for Action', which discusses many solutions to these problems for voluntary groups.

Possibly the major reason why Michels' iron law doesn't apply to all groups is because he developed it on the basis of looking at European political parties only. The social-democratic parties which were the subject of the book are by no means typical of organizations of any kind, whether voluntary or other kinds. We have seen that political activity of the kind that

parties engage in is peculiarly unsuited to mutual-aid groups. It doesn't reinforce the mutual basis of the group through the cooperative action of its members, since the systems parties work in encourage passive support rather than participation, and centralized authority rather than federation. Large-scale political lobbying isn't something which usually calls for more than a handful of people whose job it is to be influential. The same applies to unions which have national negotiation procedures as the main event of the year - the members are necessarily shut out of this by the negotiating team, whose task depends entirely on their ability to sell the outcome to the membership rather than ask them for their views. It is the differences in the activities undertaken by the groups in Michel's study and mutual-aid groups and voluntary organizations which is decisive in rejecting the applicability of the iron law as presented.

THE ROUTINIZATION OF CHARISMA

The other main classical source of the popular view of voluntary organization derives from Weber's writings on the routinization of charisma. Rather like Michel's iron law of oligarchy, Weber's account of the routinization of charisma presents a picture of a gradual and inevitable slide into mediocrity. Charisma was the term used by Weber for the sort of superhuman or divine attribution of exceptional power to an individual, and essentially is used by him as a type of authority. Charismatic authority is legitimate not because it is habitual, just or legal but because of the charisma of the leaders, who have followers (rather than members of an organization) and are obeyed not for what they say but who they are. Charisma, by its very nature, is a temporary thing - it "may be said to exist only in the process of originating" (Weber,'Theory of Social and Economic Organization' ed. Parsons, p.364). The main reasons for this routinization of charisma are firstly, that the followers want to put their activity on a

permanent basis: secondly, that the administrators want job security: and thirdly, (this is not so much a reason as a causal crisis) to resolve succession problems when the leader retires, dies or otherwise becomes detached from the followers.

Clearly, from the brief account of the theory of the routinization of charisma given above - which though condensed, is accurate - it is so obviously leader-dependent that it may not be too clear why it becomes an implicit paradigm for voluntary groups. We have seen that leadership functions can be detached from individuals, and that most groups would find a charismatic-type leader a handicap to the mutualist basis of the group at an earlier stage than the one at which charisma would be routinized. To explain how the theory of charisma becomes applied to mutual-aid groups, we have to go back to the place of rationality in Weber's thought, for it is impossible to understand what he was trying to do with the concept of charisma otherwise.

We have seen that Weber had a distinct rationalist bias in his theory of organization, as in all his social theories. This led to the problem of accounting for irrationalities which do occur in the real world, for a social theory which is primarily based on rational models cannot easily embrace the irrational. One of these questions was, if rational economic models are technically superior, why were they a product only of Western European civilization? It was his attempt to answer this question which led Weber to his theory of the link between the protestant ethic and the rise of Rationality (see his 'Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism'). Since rationality didn't have the same influence in other societies as it did in the European one, Weber had to find an irrational difference between societies to explain this, and that irrational difference was religion. Hence the link between protestantism and the rise of economic rationality, or capitalism.

Charisma occupies the same sort of role organizationally as religion does socially. It is Weber's only way of incorporating irrational elements into an organization theory. He states that

"charisma is specifically foreign to economic considerations" (op.cit.,p.362). If one assumes that Weber's sociology was complete (we have seen that it really wasn't, but just supposing it was) then if charisma is the only thing which is the basis for irrational elements in organizational theory, it follows logically that any irrational elements must somehow be charismatic. And if charisma inevitably becomes routinized, it follows that any irrational basis for an organization will become routinized also. And if feelings of belonging and belief in group benefits are the basis of an organization, then they too will become routinized - inevitably.

The process of routinization involves either traditionalization or legalization of the functions that were legitimized by charisma, and their appropriation by a bureaucracy. It should be clear now why this has become part of a paradigm of voluntary organization for social scientists brought up in the Weberian school of organization theory, even though the theory of charisma doesn't apply properly. It is because such organizations are based on irrational feelings and beliefs that establish the legitimacy of their order. Their basis is therefore charismatic-like in its irrationality, and if it is be understood at all, can only be equated with a form of charisma. It is therefore subject, inevitably, to routinization, development of bureaucracy and so forth. Since this will erode the basis of the group, routinization will lead to disintegration and therefore voluntary organization is inherently unstable. It cannot be subsumed under a rational model, is clearly innovative and not traditional, therefore it cannot last.

It isn't difficult to destroy either the force or the logic of this approach to voluntary organization and mutual-aid. The logic clearly depends on Weber's organization theory being complete. We have seen that it is not. We have, at different times, shown that Weberian ideas on organizational typology are incomplete, and that Weberian ideas on authority (and therefore legitimation) are also flawed. Once we recognize that Weber had

by no means said the last word on organizations, the logic of the position above vanishes. The force of the argument may remain - like the iron law of oligarchy, it may not be necessarily true that mutual aid is subject to routinization and then disintegration of the group, but it may be a useful enough way of looking at things. The reason why this is so is because of over-emphasis on various parts of sociological theory. We have noted the rational bias which creeps in to most social theories. Within Weber's own work, some areas were developed more fully than others: and those areas have since been 'hyped' by educators and textbooks. Charisma is a good example of Weberian 'hype' - most people with a nodding acquaintance with sociology have come across the theory of the routinization of charisma. Our best course of action is to redress the balance with a few other insights of Weber, which are remarkably pertinent to our discussions here, and received little space from him, and even less from subsequent exponents of his work.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE ROUTINIZATION OF CHARISMA

There is a little known passage in the discussion on the routinization of charisma, entitled "The transformation of charisma in an anti-authoritarian direction". (Yes! perhaps Weber wasn't such a bad egg after all ....).

> "A charismatic principle which originally was primarily directed to the legitimation of authority may be subject to interpretation or development in an anti-authoritarian direction. This is true because the validity of charismatic authority rests entirely on recognition by those subject to it, conditioned as this is by 'proof' of its genuineness ..... it is readily possible that,

> instead of recognition being treated as a consequence of legitimacy, it is treated as the basis of legitimacy. Legitimacy ..... becomes democratic."
> (Weber, op.cit. p.386)

In other words, the routinization of charisma doesn't inevitably result in bureaucracy, according to Weber. It can also result in democratic structures. The form that these structures might take are also not usually associated with Weberian organization theory - he doesn't give them anything like the same exposure as bureaucratic structures, and they vanish from the writings of his commentators. The relevant section is entitled "Anti-authoritarian forms of government". Whether Jo Freeman, Martin Jelfs or anarchist theorists know of its existence I doubt, but its contents are familiar, and I'll quote the passage at length. It deserves more exposure than Weber, or anyone else, has given it.

> "Though a certain minimum of imperative powers in the execution of measures is unavoidable, certain corporate groups may attempt to reduce it as far as possible. This means that persons in authority are held obligated to act solely in accordance with the will of the members and in their service by virtue of the authority given by them ..... The following are the principal technical means of attaining this end:
> a) Short terms of office, if possible only running between two general meetings of the members;
> b) Liability to recall at any time;

c) The principle of rotation or of selection by lot in filling offices so that every member takes a turn at some time. This makes it possible to avoid the position of power of technically trained persons or of those with long experience and command of official secrets;
d) A strictly defined mandate for the conduct of office laid down by the assembly of members. The sphere of competence is thus concretely defined and not of a general character;
e) A strict obligation to render an accounting to the general assembly;
f) The obligation to submit every unusual question which has not been forseen to the assembly of members or to a committee representing them;
g) The distribution of powers between a large number of offices each with its own particular function;
h) The treatment of office as an avocation and not as a full time occupation.
(op.cit.,p.412)

That this passage is clearly relevant to mutual-aid groups is shown by the parallels with the anarchist organizational writings we quoted in an earlier chapter as well as the duplication of many observations of our own and of contemporary writers on organization from the womens' movement and elsewhere. The reason why it has remained buried at the back of the standard edition of Weber's 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft' is simply because the solutions it contains are to problems which have historically been peripheral to the study of organizations. The solutions are equally peripheral to Weber's own concerns. And as

we have pointed out, the inappropriateness of the usual paradigm of voluntary organization is due to the fact that it treats mutual-aid and voluntary groups not on their own terms, but as if they were capable of being subsumed under the ordinary organizational models and theories used widely by analysts and academics today.

INCORPORATION AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL FLAW

The last element in the current paradigm of voluntary organization concerns the inevitability of incorporation: that is, the transformation of the group from serving its own interests and that of its members to serving the interests of the state. Again, we can illustrate this with a quotation -

> "The familiar scenario for a takeover ..... runs something along the following lines. Some local group or lay organization, through its own efforts or its 'adoption' by some branch of the media, comes to public attention. The work of the group seems, to most people who know about it, to be a good thing; a worthwhile enterprise. Then some agency, with money for this 'problem' area, advances a grant to enable the group to secure its future, at least for the short term: to rent buildings, expand its operations and generally improve its day-to-day work. The money is given with few, or even no, strings. With this priming-money, the organization expands, more money is needed, more facilities are set up, which need organizing and coordinating and more money is needed until, in the supporting agency, the question of judging the whole enterprise comes up. The agency feels that

> such a large enterprise that receives so much agency or public funding must be run by professional workers. The organization has to fulfil the accepted standards set for other government agencies and so the original thrust of the self-help group is lost and the whole enterprise becomes yet another safe, traditional but distant public service venture."
> ('Self-help and Health', Robinson and Henry, p.137-138)

This is only one model of incorporation amongst a number of current ones: however, we shan't be dealing with the more conspiratorial theories here. Our concern in this chapter isn't with objections to mutual-aid and voluntary organizations based on paranoia or conspiracy theory, but with objections based on some kind of inevitability, of which the case above is a fair sample. The questions raised by this type of incorporation are various. They concern the effects of grants on voluntary organizations generally, relations with sponsoring bodies as regards coincidence of aims and mutuality of understanding, and the nature of 'pump-priming' led expansion. We cannot deal with all of these here, but shall return to some of them later when we discuss the role of mutual-aid in the welfare state.

It is obvious that one solution to the incorporation problem outlined above is simply to avoid any form of contact with outside agencies. This is not only drastic, but for most mutual aid groups it is also ridiculous. So it would clearly be preferable if we could come to an understanding of what, in organizational terms, seems to makes this fate inevitable - for then we may be able to avoid it. We can, using the explanatory framework we have been developing up to now, put the type of circumstance above in a new light.

We know that the threefold basis of a mutual-aid group lies in the feelings of belonging together that the individuals have, their belief that what benefits the whole group will benefit them, and the co-operative action that these feelings and beliefs lead to. Robinson and Henry's paradigm of incorporation is an instance of the erosion of the mutual basis of a group. Essentially, one action in which the members become involved is the administration of a grant from a funding body. The problem is that the co-operative action of administering a grant does not arise out of the feelings of belonging of the members and their perception of group interest - the use to which the money is put may well do, but some of the work the members are doing is administering the grant. While the group itself may have more complex ideas about what it is doing, the definition of the situation is under the control of the funding agency: and it is they who define the group as basically a management entity - if this were not so, there could be no question of professionals taking the work over, and the paradigm would be inapplicable.. Even though this is only a small part of their own self-image, it can become the most significant cooperative action undertaken.

But this co-operative action is at one remove from the mutual basis of the group. This enables it to be detached, both mentally and practically, from the group itself. The difference sounds like hair-splitting, but it is not. If it were the case that the work that was being done by the group could only be done by that group - if, in other words, the link between action, beliefs and values were obvious - there would be no possibility of anybody thinking professionals could do it better. The fact is that the link between the basis of a mutual-aid group and the action it undertakes is weakened by the intervention of a sponsoring body if the action of the group becomes oriented towards that sponsorship. It is for well-meaning sponsoring agencies as well as groups themselves to work out a method of sponsorship which doesn't orient the action towards that sponsorship but at the same time does contribute. Whether that is

possible (especially on the part of the state) we shall return to later.

TOWARDS EMPIRICISM

It is important to realize at this stage is that it is possible to work out the impact of a particular form of aid for a group if we have a good understanding of the basis of that group. Of course matters are seldom simple. It is only to be expected that the avoidance of elites, the socialization of new members and all the other problems we have talked about will also have to be solved at the same time as a group needs to work out the impact of grants or something similar. It is equally likely that external pressures (which we have avoided discussing up to now) will simultaneously throw up other issues needing resolution. The point of this whole chapter is that theory is a tool that can be used against a sort of organizational fatalism - which states that it is inevitable that oligarchy/routinization/incorporation will occur because that is what happens to all voluntary groups. Our contention is that this is a false prophecy, which only gains acceptance because it is backed up by the application of supposedly objective organizational models which are in fact being used out of context. Our hope is that with a proper theory, this kind of fatalism will simply not take root.

But theory alone is not enough. Facts have to back it up. We have begun to develop our ideas, and shown the feasability and possibility of mutualistic organization. The next part of this thesis elaborates and refines what we have discussed in this part, by considering cases which show how everything we have been theorizing about actually has worked out in practice - sometimes successfully, sometimes not, but always instructively. While we have in this part been developing our ideas by looking at theory only, we will continue this same development by introducing a dose of reality.

PART THREE

CHAPTER NINE

CHAPTER NINE

DIFFERENT KINDS OF MUTUAL-AID GROUPS

We mentioned earlier in relation to mutual-aid groups the importance of defining exactly what the membership is, and who the members are. There are two sets of dichotomies here which are crucially important for any mutual-aid group to resolve in relation to its membership. As well as being theoretically important, they will serve to structure our introduction of cases from the literature. Indeed, the presentation of these two dichotomies would be impossible unless we could make references to actual cases - we could not possibly have developed this part of our argument in the purely theoretical context of the last part of the thesis. The first dichotomy is whether the membership is open or closed - whether anybody can join, or whether the number of members is limited. The second is whether membership of the group is temporary or permanent - whether one joins for life, or for a limited time only. A third factor related to this second dichotomy is whether the group itself is seen as being a temporary or a permanent fixture. For those who like their classifications in tabular form, the figure following sets the distinctions out clearly, with illustrative examples only. The reason why we have not included temporary groups with permanent members in the table is because they present a fairly obvious logical inconsistency.

	PERMANENT	GROUPS	
	WITH PERMANENT MEMBERS	WITH TEMPORARY MEMBERS	TEMPORARY GROUPS
OPEN MEMBERSHIP	consumer and disablement groups.	claimants' unions, weightwatchers	anti-road save hospital
CLOSED MEMBERSHIP	worker coop housing coop	playgroups (life cycle)	pump-priming actioncommittee

TEMPORARY GROUPS AND PERMANENT GROUPS

Let us work through each of these categories in turn, beginning with the differences between temporary groups and permanent ones. It is true, of course, that groups which have a temporary life-span - ones which can forsee the inevitability and circumstances of their own dissolution - vary widely in the length of time for which they might exist. Nevertheless, a clear theoretical distinction can be drawn between those groups which provide services for their members on a permanent basis, and those who see their existence more in relation to a goal which will be achieved in time, and thus have a temporary image of themselves. Like all clear theoretical distinctions, this one does get a bit fuzzy round the edges. A group can set itself up with a clear, achievable goal, and find itself transformed into a permanent group providing services for its members. For example, Gingerbread, the group for single parent families, was originally a group set up by and on behalf of single parents supposedly to 'ginger up the Government into providing more bread' by implementing the Finer Report, but moved on to providing more regular and permanent support services, such as regular social meetings, group holidays, and welfare rights advice.

Conversely, a group with an essentially permanent self-image can find itself with a short-term goal to achieve. For example, the campaign by charities to gain exemption from V.A.T. liability is a short-term goal for permanent organizations. Still more complicated cases exist: a goal may be nominally a temporary one, but in practise become so long term that continued activity and campaigning in pursuit of it becomes a service in its own right indistinguishable from a permanent one. Cancer research organizations, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, various groups concerned with legalization of cannabis are only a few examples of groups who would like nothing better than to wind up their organizations. That such cases exist doesn't in itself invalidate the distinction, since the subjective definition, the self-image of the group, is the important criterion. The more difficult this is in practise, the more likely it is that problems will arise over the lack of an appropriate or realistic self-definition.

Some temporary groups may well last a lot longer than supposedly permanent organizations. Claimants' Unions, for instance, are notoriously short lived, whilst temporary groups with legal reforms as aims, such as the various abortion lobbies, have a habit of soldiering on for years. Despite what we have said about such groups regarding themselves as providing de facto services (such as watchdog services, like the NCCL) one might question the utility of the distinction when it is so obviously full of difficult cases when it comes to applying it. The utility lies, however, in the three ingredients of mutual-aid groups we established earlier: co-operative action, a group ethic, and mutual feeelings of belonging.

The key question to which permanent and temporary groups would give different answers is whether or not they think it would be a desirable thing if their group were to continue indefinitely. A group with a permanent self-image would answer with an unqualified affirmative, but a group with a temporary self-image would answer, with qualifications, no. For as long as

the group continued, the goal or state of affairs it is trying to bring about would clearly not yet have been accomplished. (The obvious qualification is that they would not wish the group to wind up before this state of affairs was reached: but we could make the question an ideal one - ideally, would you like to see your group continue indefinitely?) As I have said, the subjective degree of permanence is all important. Temporary groups can withstand far greater internal stresses and strains within themselves, because the state of affairs in the group, like the group itself, is only temporary, and the eventual goal could well be considered adequate recompense for any temporary discomfort or inconvenience. To use commonly accepted jargon, a temporary group offers far greater scope for deferred gratification behaviour patterns. Deferred gratification is putting up with bad conditions now in the hope of better conditions later. This also occurs in permanent groups of course - many worker cooperatives start by paying very low wages (like most new businesses), and although the wages would be intolerable if the members thought that they would never earn anything more, the expectation that the cooperative will succeed enables them to defer their ambitions until they can afford to gratify them. In this respect, a permanent group is as resilient as a temporary group in its initial start-up phase, since the members (though viewing the group as permanent) see the difficulties as being only temporary,

The group ethic is the belief of the members that they are all better off as members of the group than they would be outside it, since what benefits the group also benefits them. Given that this is a characteristic of mutual-aid groups the relevance of the temporary/permanent distinction becomes much clearer. If the members regard the group as a temporary one, the group ethic is likely to be maintained even when the co-operative activity is apparently without reward. The payoff for the group is either all or nothing, and the members know this: so getting the nothing part is necessary and expected. On the other hand, a group which is regarded by the members as permanent and stable

cannot maintain the group ethic by using a goal as a carrot, since there isn't a goal to aim for. Once the workers in the cooperative we just invented begin to realize that the corner will never be turned, they begin to see that their low pay is permanent. Their continued membership, and the coop itself, becomes an open question once the group redefine their condition as a permanent one.

One obvious qualification appears in the chart as pump-priming: members regard the state of the organization as being a temporary one on the route to some permanently viable stable state, even though they recognize that such a stage has not yet been reached. Some groups may start off with a pump-priming self-image, but fail to graduate to the stage of having a permanent and stable subjective view of the organization - the key element throughout is the subjective view of the members. On the whole, temporary groups do seem to run more successfully as mutual-aid groups (even when the goal isn't achieved) because the group ethic is much more resilient. Even the option for redefining a situation is not as open in a temporary group, since it is by definition temporary in the first place and therefore wouldn't ever be seen as permanent in the first place. So there is less need to reinforce the group ethic, and less need for the kind of communicative competence on values we discussed earlier, since deferred gratification does it all for you. A glance at any of the regular media channels for voluntary groups, such as 'Community Action', 'In the Making', or the BBC Grapevine programme confirms the generalization about temporary groups being more resilient, though our suggested reason is purely hypothetical.

PROBLEMS OF ENDS AND MEANS

If the problems of maintaining group ethics are more severe in permanent groups, there is one particular problem for temporary groups which permanent ones seldom have to face. This is assuming that the end justifies the means, and as a consequence adopting various tactics and strategies which are known to be dangerous in the long run, in the hope that the long run will never come. The same mechanism of deferred gratification in a temporary group which enables a group ethic to be maintained even when an outsider would regard it as a myth, can also be used to justify elitist, hierarchical, coercive and other non-voluntary unmutual practices in the hope that this will enable the group to move towards its goal more quickly. I suspect that this is one of the non-articulated criticisms which some parts of the women's movement have against what they call 'single issue organizing': it isn't simply that organizing around a single issue is like treating symptoms rather than tackling causes, but that it leads to an essentially instrumental view of group activity. The goal becomes the god, and it is possible to become so devoted to attaining an end that the means used to achieve it can contradict the reasons for wanting the goal in the first place. There will never, for instance, be a war to end all wars, unless it be the big bang itself.

This identification of possible contradictions between the values implicit in ends, and the means used to achieve them is itself evaluative. It relates back to the belief in the values implicit in mutualism, and to the anarchist belief that the ends never justify the means. Many people would be quite happy to reach a goal by hierarchical and elitist methods, and would regard the position taken here as hopelessly romantic at best. This is probably responsible for the observable paradox that though temporary mutual-aid groups are both easier to organize and to maintain than permanent groups, there aren't that many more of them.

In most pressure groups, co-operative working is seen as less efficient than centralized decision making and fixed committee structures. This does have some truth in it, depending on the tactics used by the pressure group. Most pressure-group tactics tend to use institutionalized channels for pressure - lobbying representatives, being represented at inquiries and so forth. As actions go, they demand intense concentrated presssure by a few people acting as representatives of the whole membership, rather than involving the whole membership in the action. Most members of pressure-groups don't act as much as support those who are doing the acting. That such a system is a product of a representative democratic political system is obvious. Passive support replaces co-operative action. There is a coalition of interests rather than a group interest, and the basis for a mutual-aid group isn't usually present. The type of action is all important. The fact that temporary mutual-aid groups can be tempted exclusively into action which doesn't involve the members of the group is a potential threat to the basis of the organization, and can make subsequent groups more difficult to establish.

SOME EXAMPLES

An example of this problem is found in the story of the West Cumberland Action Committee as reported in 'Community Groups in Action', by Butcher, Collis, Glen and Sills. Whilst the story does involve more issues than this one problem, the following central points emerge. First, a group of mothers organized a group around the issue of bus fare increases. The group numbered about thirty people, about one hundred attended a public meeting and three thousand signed a petition.(p.55, op.cit) Secondly, after the initial launch of the group, it became involved fairly heavily in lobbying, meetings with officials and representatives (p.65, op.cit.). Third, the authors of the study reported that the group

> "seems to have fallen between two stools: first, it became isolated from its local constituency (its main source of public support) and second, it proved unable to establish links with other organizations ..... this may have been caused by its decision to direct most of its energies into influence-exertion ..... the committee had moved too far from the bases from which it originated." (op.cit. p.69)

In other words, the fact that there was no co-operative action meant that the mutualistic basis of the original group couldn't be reinforced. The feelings of belonging which had led to the original support of the group hadn't been channelled into a group ethic or co-operative action because the single issue of the local transport policy had been taken as being the only thing that mattered. When the hoped-for quick results failed to materialize, it had become too late to retrieve the situation.

However, this is by no means an inevitable result of temporary pressure group organizing. Perhaps the best-documented account of a group which didn't run into the type of problems we've been discussing is found in Sidney Jacob's book on the Gairbraid Housing Committee, 'The Right to a Decent House'. The Gairbraid group didn't make the mistakes the West Cumberland group made. In the first place, instead of sending delegates to the authorities, they brought the authorities to the group at a public meeting. In the second place, they used direct action tactics such as mass protests and used the media well, and all these activities involved the community and strengthened feelings of belonging. In the third place, the advocacy role the group adopted was not only as pure a form of mutual aid as one is likely to find anywhere, but it also linked the committee, the community and the problems they all faced into a direct series of

confrontations with the local housing department, resulting in a further demonstration of the truths which lay at the basis of the group ethic - that what was good for the group was good for the individual. As Jacobs sums up -

> "The GHC had an effective life of about sixteen months ..... during this time, sixty-eight committee meetings and seven public meetings were held. Petitions were sent to the housing manager and to the Secretary of State for Scotland, and Gairbraid was responsible for a trade union resolution condemning Glasgow's rehousing policy. On two separate occasions the GHC sent delegations to the City Chambers ..... the area was featured on a 'Current Account' television programme and obtained considerable press publicity. The GHC organized two demonstrations at the Housing Department of which one involved people from other areas. Ten documents for external consumption were issued ..... every Gairbraid household also received thirteen newsletters ..... Committee members accompanied residents to the Housing Department, were involved in legal representation, liason with the police, and advocacy with the social work department. The GHC organnized a pre-school playgroup, bingo sessions, a mothers' group, a trip to Edinburgh, visits to old age pensioners and various other social activities."

Full marks to the Gairbraid Housing Committee. Cooperative action, feelings of belonging and belief in the efficacy of group action were all reinforced by the actions they organized. The community, unlike the West Cumberland case, was not simply there to provide

legitimation of committee activities taking place out of sight and not involving the local people.

TEMPORARY MEMBERSHIP AND PERMANENT MEMBERSHIP

Let us now take our second dichotomy: this is whether the membership of the group, as opposed to the group itself, is temporary or permanent. This isn't an either/or dichotomy, as many groups have both types of members. There is almost bound to be a preponderance of one of the types of members, though: and mixtures can, and often do, create problems of their own.

Again, the degree of impermanence may vary widely. When I first began looking at claimants' unions a virtually complete turnover of membership in about three months was not uncommon (though this is doubtless less frequent now than it was then). A pre-school playgroup doesn't complete a cycle for two years, or three if it admits children at two and they don't go to school till they are five. Some similiar life-cycle groups may have an even longer turnaround time. One main reason why the permanent/temporary dichotomy is so important is because of the fact that new members of the group have to be socialized into the group ethic, the habits of the group, and may well need to develop a feeling of belonging - feeling at home with the group. if you like. In many cases, co-operative working will be new to them also, and this requires both the learning and sharing of new skills. As we have noted earlier, most people would join out of self-interest, rational motives, and the suspension of self-interest in favour of group interest - what Habermas called the repression of generalizable interest - is as a consequence essential if the group is not to disintegrate under the stresses and strains of opposing self-interests. One key problem of groups with temporary members is how to achieve all this as quickly as possible.

An obvious reason why claimants' unions have usually been so short-lived is because the average time someone is a member has, until recently, been too short to enable any socialization to occur successfully, and too short to enable the skills built up by one generation to be passed on to the next. The fact that new claimants have more personal preoccupations in relation to their new status doesn't aid this either. Even in times of mass unemployment this is liable to be true, because typically a union is approached only in the initial stages of the process of claiming, and then only if difficulties are encountered: and most people are understandably not keen to immerse themselves in a claimant's role and would prefer to be working. The mainstay of most claimants' unions I have come across have been not the unemployed but those on long-term sickness benefit, for instance, who are not able to work, rather than the unemployed as such. The shorter the average time of membership and involvement in a mutual-aid group of the temporary membership variety, the greater the pressure and the more urgent the need to socialize new members: and even under ideal circumstances (whatever those may be) this is bound to be quite a skilled task.

Groups with permanent members face different problems in this context. Though they are not faced with a crucially short period of time in which to socialize new members, it may well be likely that the existing permanent members of the group will routinize their involvement, fall into predictable but personally satisfying routines, and have a protective, not to say possessive attitude towards their organization. We have already touched on this in the discussion on structurelessness, and the issue of oligarchy, which we have already dealt, with covers some of these problems too. It is worth pointing out that socialization of new members in a group of permanent members is likely to be just as difficult as in the temporary instance, but for an opposite reason. In a sense, the group ethic has gone haywire in the same way as the human body's rejection mechanisms go against its own best interests when a transplant problem occurs. The development

of a group identity does involve the delineation of clear boundaries between the group and the world outside the group, and to accept an incomer as part of the group involves the suppresion of otherwise healthy reflexes to reject outsiders. Older members can jealously guard their prerogatives against the real or imaginary challenges of new members.

MIXTURES

This brings us back to a problem we mentioned earlier, for a mixture of old and new permanent people in a group presents many of the same problems as does a mixture of permanent and temporary members. The central feature of a mutual-aid group which causes the problem is that mutual feelings of belonging and the group ethic are both predicated on a common interest existing in fact: but when some members are temporary and others permanent, or some new and others of longer standing, there is obviously the possibility of opposed interest groups to develop around the visible heterogeneity within the organization. For example, in a residents' group in a derelict inner-city area, permanent and well-established households may wish for rehabilitation of the houses, whilst temporary and newer residents, lacking deep roots in the area, could well feel that they are better off being rehoused. Or more basically, perhaps, permanent members of a group may well decide that involving temporary members in decision-making and the running of the organization is simply not worth the investment of energy in training and in overcoming the continuity problems generated when they leave - and in the back of their minds there is always the posssibility that the mere fact of temporary membership can only mean a lesser commitment. In both cases, the egalitarianism essential to the group, implicit in its mutual nature and communicative competence, is threatened. A balance between permanent and temporary members, or old and new members, is very difficult to strike. There's a

lovely illustration of the old/new problem in the study of Ilys Booker's playgroup in West London in the 1960's, as reported by Mitton and Morrison in their book, 'A Community Project in Notting Dale', which is incidentally full of anecdotes relevant to many areas of this thesis. This one, though, concerns a new playleader, called Janet, who didn't like the children playing in a courtyard full of broken glass and took them to a park instead.

> "Sometimes she walked up with them and sometimes they went in a van driven by one of the new mothers. Mrs. Fellows and Mrs. Travers were worried about all this, that the children would get lost in the park, that there were busy roads to cross, when they walked there and back, and that the van they sometimes went in was not insured. They regarded the children as their responsibility and told Janet not to take them to the park. Janet knew that some of the new mothers preferred the park, so she demanded a mothers' meeting. This took place in the courtyard and was attended by about ten mothers including the younger ones with children in the playgroup, the older ones with no children in the playgroup but still involved in the group. and a few older ones who had had little to do with the playgroup for some time. The two views were stated and the group divided at a vote ..... Janet and some of the mothers with children currently in the playgroup had never seen some of the older mothers who appeared at the playgroup ..... to Mrs. Travers and Mrs. Fellows it was these mothers who had formed the group in its heyday ..... getting the playgroup back to the courtyard was part of

their wish that the playgroup might regain its former character."
(Mitton and Morrison, op.cit. p.132-133)

This kind of problem is much easier to contain in a group which has only one or two permanent members amidst a large number of temporary ones, such as a playgroup with a permanent playleaders. Though it is possible for such a group to fail to realize the possibility of developing something akin to an oligarchy or an elite, this isn't common, let alone inevitable. There actually are advantages in such an arrangement, for not only do the temporary members find the continuity and accumulated skills of such a person a valuable resource, but typically someone in the position of being a permanent member of an otherwise temporary group is more than usually aware of the possible problems, and has had time to develop the skills and expertise necessary to avoid the problems and realise the advantages. Also, with only one or two permanent members amidst a large number of temporary ones, it is easier to isolate and solve any difficulties. One or two people are less likely to constitute an interest group of their own, especially when the organization is so clearly based on the co-operation of the permanent and temporary members.

Conversely, many groups with permanent members find an occasional temporary member not in the least threatening, but actually refreshing and useful as a source of new ideas. This type of situation may even be encouraged as a means of recruiting posssible new members, by seeing them and working with them over a period of time with no commitment to continued membership - a sort of pre-socialization period in fact. Probationary periods of this type are common in organizations of all types and forms, not just voluntary ones or mutual-aid groups. Alternatively, many groups have found an exchange of members with similar groups provide useful experiences for all concerned (as university lecturers may know). In both the above situations, a mixture of

permanent and temporary members is controlled to the extent that conflicts and threats have little chance of developing.

OPEN GROUPS AND CLOSED GROUPS

The last of our distinctions (which we have been dealing with in reverse order from the chart - we've been sort of working outwards) is that between open and closed groups. This raises perhaps the most difficult questions. There is a possible misconception to be avoided at the very start. An open group in the sense in which we use it here is one which has no limit to the number of members. The fact that most mutual-aid groups restrict membership to certain categories of people is a necessary consequence of there being a group to belong to at all and does not of itself make the group a closed one. In other words, restricted membership is not the same as closed membership. For instance, a women-only group may be open to all women who choose to come. It would therefore be an open group, even though no men were allowed to join. Closure is related to a limit on size. If a housing co-operative had twenty houses at its disposal, which were available to anyone irrespective of class, race, sex, age, religion, colour, marital status or anything else then any human being is a potential member, and there is nobody who cannot join. But the group is a closed one because there are only twenty households available. There are only three cases I can think of which do not fit neatly into one or the other pigeonhole. The first is a group which does have a maximum size, but has such difficulty in attracting members that it is for all intents and purposes open to everyone. The second is a group which has a maximum size, but is open to everyone because it splits into two groups when it reaches maximum size. Many consciousness-raising and therapeutic groups are of this type, and effectively can also be treated as open ones. The third is a group which though closed to outsiders can grow through natural

increase - the members have children who automatically qualify. Some communes, kibbutzim, some religious communities (not monasteries) fit into this category. Interestingly, the Hutterite communities of the nothern USA and Canada combine this type of community with the second - such is their birth rate that they split, like amoebae, every twenty years or so. On the whole, they can be treated as closed groups of families rather than individuals: and interesting though they may be, they are outside the mainstream of mutual-aid groups.

Whether a mutual-aid group is open or closed is as fundamental to its nature as whether it, or its members, are temporary or permanent, and for many of the same reasons. Open groups have many of the same problems as temporary groups do: the difficulties raised by the need to socialize new members are common to both. Unless an open group succeeds in this, it falls into one of two pits. It may degenerate into a two-tier group, with an oligarchical elite controlling decision-making. This elite is composed of the older members and ignores a larger and growing number of new members who haven't been integrated into the group properly. Or alternatively, the open nature of the group may allow full participation of people who haven't incorporated the group ethic into their attitudes, and don't have the sense of belonging which is essential if they are to participate in the control and leadership functions necessary for the group to function effectively.

BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

Both these problems are essentially boundary problems. As we have mentioned before, a group of any kind must maintain an identity for it to develop into a cohesive relationship, and this identity must be based on firm boundaries being drawn in the minds of the members between those inside the group, and those outside: and those boundaries must function effectively in reality if the identity is to be maintained. The process is

analagous to the development and maintenance of the belief that what benefits the group benefits the individual in that it can tolerate a certain degree of mythology in its makeup, but if that mythological element becomes too great, people find it impossible to base their practical actions on it. The boundaries of a group must be real enough to allow group identity to be maintained.

We have seen in the case of permanent groups with temporary members what happens if the boundaries cannot be relaxed in order to allow new members to join, and exactly the same considerations apply to open groups in recruiting new members. Inevitably there will be rites of passage, or initiation ceremonies of some kind, either formal or informal, which mark the crossing of the boundary. Attending a first meeting, or being asked to take responsibility for something, or putting one's name down on a roster of some kind fulfil this function for both the new individual and the group as a whole. There is a moment in an association with an existing group when a participant feels that they have 'arrived': acceptance is no longer in doubt and a feeling of belonging has been reinforced and stabilized by the crossing of a boundary. Once crossed, the boundary still serves the purpose of identifying members from non-members in terms of common experiences of members as well as the more obvious exclusion of outsiders. (There is an obvious analogy with deviance theory here: see Howard Becker's paper on marijuana smoking for an example. J. Romero Maura also remarks on the analogy with deviance theory in his paper on the C.N.T. in Spain.)

Where the boundaries are undefined, identity isn't maintained and the distinction between insiders and outsiders disintegrates in the minds of all concerned. A feeling of belonging is impossible to maintain, as nothing is perceived which anyone could belong to. A belief in the group ethic becomes similarly counterfactual, since where no group is perceptible, no group benefit can be seen to exist either. Typically, cases of this type fall into two categories. In the first category are

groups which fail to become established because of the lack of boundaries: they have made the fatal mistake of not defining who they are. More often than not these instances are put down as good ideas which failed to materialize, or which generated lots of enthusiasm but failed to capitalize on it. Their status as failed groups isn't always apparent. In the second category, undefined boundaries turn suddenly into sharply defined ones in an effort to reverse the disintegration, and people who thought they were already members find that their status is doubtful. There may be accusations of purges and coups by the newly-excluded members, which often invoke a reaction which turns the boundaries into such tight ones that new members cannot easily join, and the first kind of boundary problem arisesinstead. Forcible exclusion does serve to strengthen feelings of belonging inside the group, but at the cost of alienating possible potential members among those excluded, who may still be part of a wider constituency of informal support whose goodwill may be required even if involvement is not.

PROBLEMS OF SIZE

The other main problem of an open group is related to size. Groups commonly have an open membership because they find political or financial advantages in being as large as possible. Two obvious examples are mass pressure group campaigns, which seek to speak for as wide a constituency as possible, and groups seeking to raise money by subscription to provide a needed service of some kind. Many groups combine both reasons - trades unions are one of the oldest examples of this. The greater the number who join in, the greater the legitimacy of the group or the sounder its finances are. Such groups tend to become ever larger, and the larger the group, the more acute the problems posed by size. Beyond a certain limit it is bound to be impossible to involve all those who may wish to take part in

decision making, and the greater the possibility of elites and oligarchies developing. In some cases, this is happily resolved by a more dedicated core group emerging of those who want to take such responsibility, with the others being happy to adopt a more passive role - this often occurs in constituency-type community groups. The Gairbraid Housing Committee (see Jacobs, op.cit.) was an example of this. In other cases, oligarchy may become almost inevitable. This is a topic which was discussed earlier, but we can note now that splitting the group and federating the parts is a solution to this which works under the proper circumstances (which are if people want it to).

Another danger in large groups is that special interest groups may develop within the main group, and this may threaten common group ethics. The different interests may become opposed, and infighting results. There is a partial analogy here with the old/new member split discussed earlier. The symptoms are the same, but the cure is different. The problem is one that doesn't go away - opposed interests tend to grow away from each other, while age differences tend to vanish with accumulated experiences. A previously integrated group can turn into a coalition of interest groups. If this is a stable coalition, it becomes similar to a federation and does no great harm - it is an evolutionary development. But if two or more opposing interests in a group imply opposing rather than complementary courses of action, this is a different circumstance entirely. Splits between owner-occupiers and tenants in residents' groups are often of this nature.

ONE MORE EXAMPLE

The North Tyneside CDP gives an example of just this sort. The background to this passage is the failed attempt by the CDP to expand the size and widen the basis of a local resident's group.

> "There was a division between the council tenants on the new estate and the older residents in the clearance area, mainly based on resentment by residents because they felt that they should have been given the new houses: between the older residents, mainly owner-occupiers, in the clearance area and the newer tenants, whom the older residents regarded as not maintaining the old values and standards of the village and many of whom they regarded as 'problem families'; between most of these people and those who live in the east side of the village in semi-detached houses who were regarded as 'toffee-nosed'. The PMRAG (Percy Main Residents Action Group) reflected the concern of both the owner-occupiers in the clearence area and in the private housing in preserving a 'respectable community' in Percy Main. By providing a formalised focus for these values the PMRAG exacerbated the conflicts between the owner occupiers and tenants in the clearance area."
> ('North Shields: Organising for Change in a Working Class Area', North Tyneside CDP, p.19)

We ought to note, in justice, that according to the CDP, the original group had none of the tenants, who were over half the residents, as members: and that they clearly saw the PMRAG later on as a middle class pressure group run by the local doctor and vicar. What the CDP eventually did was to set up a rival group, called the Percy Main Pushers, and withdraw from the attempt to expand the original group.

Whatever the rights or wrongs of the situation, and irrespective of whether the original PMRAG was a mutual-aid group or a vicar-doctor front, the case is cited here as a clear instance of an increase in size (prompted by the CDP's wish to work with a large representative group) leading to conflicts between different interests within the group where only one group interest existed before. This isn't meant to reflect on the legitimacy of either interest in a political or moral sense. Both groups have a right to expression, whether they conflict or not. Our mutual aid theory doesn't at the moment incorporate any frameworks for the resolution of conflict. This would probably need to incorporate rather more ideas from social psychology and group therapy than we have space for here, and in any event, it would be unrealistic to expect us to cover all the areas our subject touches on completely and conclusively from scratch.

MORE ON SIZE

Other problems may also arise from increase in size. If the group does develop a stable and acceptable leadership within itself, there is always the possibility that the size of the group and the consequent burdens and tasks of responsibilities may be too great, and the group won't function properly if this is so. Many of these problems are common to any large organization, not merely mutual-aid groups. The technique of splitting into smaller groups and federating is a solution to problems of size implicit in anarchist theory, and we have mentioned this earlier. The experience of such techniques has developed, partly through the work of the ever-present women's movement and partly through the work of anti-nuclear federation which have both developed and flourished in the last few years. Breaking up into small groups has become a standard format for conferences of all sorts for much the same sort of reason. Within federations, rotating chairmanships and strict limits on time spent as officials of the group is an equally common technique

for maintaining equality (the EEC Council of Ministers adopts both these tactics: the EEC has always had the mythology of being a mutual-aid group between nations). The technique works by turning a potentially open and oversized decision-making body into a succesSsion of smaller, closed ones - the theory is that as long as the people in positions of influence know that their position is temporary, they are unlikely to abuse it, and other groups don't become discontented because they are aware that their own turn will come. The CND in Spain, it will be remembered, practised geographical rotation amongst members.

One other problem is akin to the open groups we mentioned earlier, which nobody wants to join, as well as the cases where the leadership functions are too great. Many open groups go through long periods of hibernation because nobody wants to do any work or take on any of the leadership functions. Perhaps the group is waiting for the right time to do something, or requires more energy than can be given except in short spurts. Raising consciousness among members is the only solution if this is felt to be a problem, and it is a tactical question rather than an organizational one, so we shall not go into it here.

PROBLEMS OF CLOSED GROUPS

There are two main reasons for groups being closed ones (apart from security). The first is a desire for small size - it is recognized that open groups do have the size problems we have just discussed. Elites, caucuses and divided interests may be seen as inevitable if the group grows beyond a certain size, perhaps that where formal elections become necessary. The second reason for a group being closed takes us back to Olson and the logic of collective action. If a group grows large and the total benefit remains the same, the benefit each member gets is lessened. This is often the case where there is a finite and visible limit to the public good being provided - space is a good example. Often the benefit, beyond a certain limit, may be

inversely proportional to size. An example of this type of benefit is found in educational mutual-aid groups (adult or child) where large classrooms (or playgroups) lead eventually to a vanishingly small benefit, and people are better off at home reading books. And a playgroup of five thousand children would defeat the whole point of having a playgroup in the first place. Any child would be better off and safer at home. Optimum size is a very real phenomenon. So is a finite good - a workers' co-operative who admitted all the unemployed as members would die the death instantly - or else wages would be reduced to pence and nobody would qualify for benefits either.

Despite the fact that there are some perfectly good reasons for making groups closed ones - indeed, in the cases above the reasons are not only sound but essential - it is the closed type of mutual-aid group which has always been the most widely criticized on grounds of exclusivity. Playgroups are often criticized for being exclusively middle-class (by the Wolfenden Committee on Voluntary Organizations amongst others). Beatrice Webb castigated nineteenth-century producer co-operatives as being mere joint-stock companies owned by their founders. Kibbutzim have recently been employing outside labour (usually Arab) as soon as the unit cost of such labour becomes less than their own per-capita income. And many housing associations are seen (e.g. by Community Action magazine) as being simply ways for middle-class people to jump the council waiting lists.

POSSIBILITIES OF EXPLOITATION

There is no doubt that a possibility exists for a mutual-aid group to become an agent of exploitation of others for the benefit of its own members - this is inherent in any kind of interest, whether a group one or otherwise. I cannot conceive of any form of human organization which does not have the potential for harm as well as good. Criticisms of particular groups do not

add up to a criticism of mutual-aid as a concept, and I would maintain that on balance, an organization which is a mutual-aid group is less likely to be unaware of its wider social environment and less likely to harm non-members than any other kind of organization. The reflexive application of the principles which structure the organization internally to the external world is the cause of this.(We can note in passing the far greater tendency of mutual-aid group members to exploit themselves, in that they do things in conditions they wouldn't dream of tolerating were they not in a mutual-aid group).

The implication is that there is an obligation on mutual-aid groups to maintain their own internal egalitarianism in their relations with the wider society in which they exist. This logic only holds true if mutual-aid groups exist in a mutual-aid society, however. The assumption made by those critics who write off the aims of mutual aid organizations as being simple manifestations of self-interest on the part of sectional groups in society is that there is a group ethic amongst organizations in that society which parallels the group ethic between individuals in a group. Mutual aid groups ought therefore to act as if their own welfare depended on the welfare of the society around them. There is no problem about this if all groups in a society reciprocate that action. But to extend the obvious truism that the welfare of a group depends on the welfare of the whole society into an argument for the unqualified acceptance of the institutions of that society is as fallacious as objecting to a mutual-aid group ejecting freeloaders. The key element, unstated, in the equation is always the state as the guardian of social order. The fact is that many people in mutual-aid groups have become involved in this type of action because of the inaction of the state and its unwillingness to support them, or may have become involved to defend themselves against the state. The members have no reason to trust governments or assume that their interests are identical, and may have good reasons to assume the contrary. The belief that society would be better off without the

state, or without many other institutions we are all meant to support, is a perfectly reasonable one to hold. If one holds it, the argument that a mutual-aid group ought to accept or even support the institutions of the society of which it is a part becomes untrue in general, though it may hold true in particular cases. Reciprocity of this support is the first necessary item in this, which amounts to a mutual-aid federation of a whole society. I do not need to say that this is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

OBJECTIONS TO MUTUAL-AID

One other reason why mutual-aid groups are criticized applies particularly keenly to closed groups, and arises from a similar line of thought, which sees all solutions as ultimately emanating from the state. If the state does not provide enough, this argument runs, we ought to pressure it, through our democratic institutions, into providing more, for three reasons. Firstly, because to provide it ourselves is divisive: it may lessen the strength of our commitment to universalism in social institutions.Secondly, because it takes away state resources which ought rightly to be assigned according to a broader social plan. Lastly, because it is no proper solution in the long-term since it bypasses the state. To which the answers are as follows. One, creating deprivation is divisive, not meeting needs: two, mutual-aid groups create resources and in any case, the problem is one of control rather than mere distribution: and the third argument is clearly a circular one (and anarchists would say that no solution which doesn't bypass the State can be permanent).

This whole issue is of greatest political importance, and there are some claims made which appear on the surface to be plausible, but are in fact either nonsensical or taken from a context where they make a lot more sense. The most notable of these is that,somehow, people who form a mutual-aid group to

solve a particular problem are responsible for the continuation of that problem, or even its aggravation, for non-members. The tactic of blamimg victims is a time-honoured one in state political systems. But people cannot justly be held responsible for a problem they did not create. Nor can they be held responsible for a problem when they have not only not created it, but have instead found a solution of their own. Equally, to blame them for the actions of a system they have actively opposed when the response of that system to their success is to victimize or ignore others is looking to blame the wrong party. It is impossible to respond at all to circumstances which demand it when we fear that any response will only make matters worse.

No group can solve any problems by leaving them in the hands of those who have created the problem and found no answers to give them. Sidney Jacobs writes, of Gairbraid and its Housing Action Committee -

> "it is said, Gairbraid's aspirations were achieved only at the expense of other areas who were unorganized ..... To expect people to forego the chance of a decent house because somewhere in the city an unknown person may be deprived, is to attribute to them either irresponsibility to their own family, gullibility, stupidity or saintliness. The system creates extreme competition and it is therefore a distortion to place the onus for both unfair distribution and the existing shortages on the residents rather than on the authorities whose priorities, policies and practises are entirely responsible ..... If the GHC had not existed, people elsewhere would not have been treated better, Gairbraid would simply have been treated as badly ..... To accuse the GHC of selfishness is to ignore

> its record of helping other areas and consistently trying to achieve city-wide reform ..... to behave otherwise is to comply with an unjust system while opposition, even on a small scale, opens it to public debate and perhaps begins a process which may inspire others and may even change it."

One might add, more positively, that as long as the system works, however badly, it will not be changed if nobody acts. If we want to act, and the system still works after our action, it will not be changed either. It is only when a system has ceased to work that a replacement will be found for it. And if a mutual-aid group is told it is making things worse, it will only hasten the day when an unjust and unfair system will be replaced.

And a warning admission to end with: if a system, despite all its faults, has no viable alternative, none of the above follows logically. Optimists will say that something better must exist, pessimists will ask what it is. We said in the beginning that the main argument against anarchism was that it was impossible. The purpose of this treatise is to demonstrate the possibilities inherent in mutual-aid as a coherent organizational strategy. Its possibility and functioning is what we are establishing. Inevitably, the way groups function is affected profoundly by the political system from which they arise. Whilst we have just been drawn into discussing, in the last few paragraphs of this chapter, some of the ethical questions which this might raise, the practicalities of links between the state and voluntary organizations is a topic which is clearly important and we shall return to it later. We move on in the next chapter, as a bridge from theory and from taking mutual aid groups in isolation, to consider the very real political questions which can arise within mutual aid groups. As well as being important in itself, this too is an aid to the further development of the framework for analysis which we are developing: and we shall also take the

opportunity of considering a case which will enable us to apply it more fully than we have done up till now.

CHAPTER TEN

CHAPTER TEN

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

The experience of people involved in mutual-aid groups is inevitably political, and raises pragmatic questions quite distinct from those of theory and principle. These may be questions of an external nature, concerning relationships between one group and another, or between a group and an umbrella organization, or a funding one such as the State. However interesting these may be - and indeed, they are often the first which come to the minds of many interested in voluntary organizations - they are for our present purpose contingent on the internal questions with which we shall deal first. These internal questions concern decision making, allocation of responsibilities and tasks, leadership, and accountability to members. It is often the case that these are not regarded as political questions at all, but nothing could be further from the truth. Possibly the most useful slogan of the contemporary Women's Movement (if slogans are ever useful) is that 'the personal is political'. Problems apparently affecting only individuals are often facets of political issues with a public dimension having a much larger impact on many more people.

> "One of the first things we discover in these (consciousness-raising) groups is that personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution."
> (Carol Hanisch,'The Personal is Political')

The recognition of this is what brings internal organizational issues into the political sphere, and the way such internal problems are resolved is often a deciding factor when external, overtly political questions have to be resolved later on. Originally, the idea that the personal is political was developed as a way of generating political actions and ideas out of individual experiences, but it applies equally forcefully when used in connection with interpersonal experiences in groups. Some groups are just as likely as individuals to regard themselves as unfortunate exceptions, and therefore look for an individual solution to what they imagine to be merely an isolated, individual, problem.

The recognition that there is this political dimension to personal or interpersonal problems is not, however, the same as saying that all political problems can be reduced to interpersonal ones, as Robin Morgan has eloquently pointed out.

> "We know that the personal is political. But if the political is solely personal, then those of us at the barricades will be in big trouble."
> (Robin Morgan, 'Going Too Far', p.186)

Consideration of the political aspects of one's own life and that of our peers is an activity which any of us reflecting on involvement in a solidary relationship of any kind (that is, one in which we are responsible for the actions of others taken on behalf of the group) must necessarily undertake. This would be true even if (as is usually the case) we fail to reconcile any insights gained through finding solutions to personal or group problems with our overtly political inclinations and attitudes. There may well be an incompatibility between the political implications of such individual solutions on the one hand, and the politics of organizations on the other. There is a clear

distinction between those organizations which do not bother to attempt a reconciliation and those that do: between organizations for which personal attitudes are an irrelevancy, and those for which they are the blocks from which the group's political stance is constructed. The latter group must allow for individual expression if the organizational attitudes are to develop, whilst for the former, individual views are a distraction at best.

The point of this argument is that for a mutual-aid group to function, the building blocks are going to be the beliefs of the members and their ability to work together. Unless the individual is allowed and encouraged to express feelings, worries and thoughts about how they relate to the group and how it seems to be functioning, there will be no mechanism for monitoring the foundations of the structure. It is clearly going to be pot luck to try and form a mutual-aid group and take no notice of what the members feel about each other and the organization. It is the ability to see the organizational implications, the political worries, which lie behind individually expressed views and then take the necessary action, which is clearly essential if a group ethic, feelings of belonging, and co-operative action are to be the basis of a group. This ability isn't, by definition, really capable of planning for. Autonomy and democracy are in this instance attitudes rather than anything else.

But like many distinctions clear enough in the abstract, the one outlined here also tends to become blurred at the edges when we try to apply it to cases and to people. Nevertheless, the way in which personal needs and feelings relate to organizational politics is at the root of some historical and legal distinctions which are semantically clear, though they tend to overlap in practise. Our label of mutual aid is one, and two others are self-help and charities. All three, as well as related concepts like community group and grass-roots body are related not as much by any theoretical or conceptual parameters, but simply by common usage and media exposure. There is a tendency to use permutations of these phrases as if they were synonymous, possibly through

lack of thought, possibly out of ignorance, probably out of desire in many cases for a better literary style.

SELF-HELP

In the late nineteenth century, the apostle of self-help was Samuel Smiles, whilst the prophet of mutual aid was Kropotkin. It is difficult to imagine any two people who could better represent the polarities of their time and yet remain comparable in their work. Smiles was an establishment preacher, every atom of him a Victorian Anglo-Scot, born in Haddington with a successful career in London. Kropotkin was an exiled aristocrat, a revolutionary with no home for most of his life, who attained eminence as a geographer and fame as a political philosopher. It was the socially conformist Smiles who enunciated the individualistic ethic of self-help, and the individualistic rebel Kropotkin who performed the same service for the collectivist ideas of mutual aid. Such are the contradictions of the nineteenth century. We have already mentioned Kropotkin's ideas about mutual aid: Smiles' book on self help is equally anecdotal as 'Mutual Aid' is. It is composed almost entirely of stories concerning eminent individuals who began their life in (comparative) poverty and obscurity and then rose by their own efforts out of the deprived masses to become rich and/or successful. He advocated the same course for anyone who wanted to better themselves. Poverty, deprivation and lack of education are now agreed to be mostly political and social phenomena - Smiles was thus advocating personal solutions for political problems. Self help in this sense is different to mutual aid in precisely the area with which we began this chapter - personal problems for Smiles had no real political dimension.

For many of the areas in which self help supposedly applies, the logic is faulty. To give an illustration - once there were chain letters sent round (maybe they still are) which told the recipient to send one pound to the person at the top of a list of

seven or so, add their name to the bottom, strike the top name off, and send the letter out again to twenty of their friends. The letters promised to result in thousands dropping on the doormat in a fortnight or so, and usually threatened cosmic retaliation by the little people if you either ignored the instructions or broke the chain. The mathematics are easy to work out - assume that there are seven on the list and each person is so intimidated that they do send it out to twenty more. Your name will be at the top of a letter received by twenty to the power of six people - or to put it another way, 64,000,000 . This is more than the population of this country, so it cannot work for everybody. Indeed, either the little people would have their work cut out doing whatever they do to punish non-co-operators, or the postal services would get very jammed very quickly, or else we would in the end receive as many requests for pounds as pounds we received. Sixty-four million to be precise, and we would have to pay the postage on each one. The economic effect of all the money sitting around in understaffed sorting offices would be deflationary to put it mildly, and some bright spark in the treasury would no doubt realize the vast potential of a tax on circular letters. The redistributive effects of all this would favour only those who cheated, but no doubt the little people would see to them. Lawyers would argue for years over their estates (in between dealing with their own mail, of course). The analogy with Samuel Smiles' ideas, carried to their logical conclusion, is pretty close. We can't all be first violins in the orchestra because if we were there wouldn't be any orchestra. Where wealth comes from the exploitation of the poor, we can't all be wealthy, and where power is measured in terms of the number of people you can order about we can't all be powerful. Where access to education is limited, we can't all be educated, and where housing is not built we can't all have houses, let alone live in mansions. Samuel Smiles' world is what games theorists call a zero-sum game, in which aggregate wins always balance aggregate losses.

Mutual aid, by contrast, is essentially a group phenomenon and not an individual one, and arises out of common need. It is a whole new ball game for those involved, with no zero-sum assumptions. The issues may be the same as the personal ones of the self-helpers, but the solution is sought through the group, by the group and for the group. It is thus political by nature, even though its roots lie in personally perceived problems. Oddly enough, Smiles gives an excellent example in the introduction to 'Self-Help', of a group of young men who were seeking to remedy deficiencies in their education by organizing adult education classes which they ran collectively. They invited Smiles to talk to them, which he did. Their fate is nowhere recorded, which is sad, but it would no doubt make excellent material for either a Ph.D thesis or an historical novel. This early forerunner to the W.E.A. is an example of group activity. In principle, everyone could adopt the same solution to a problem. Whereas it is impossible to remedy educational deprivation by sending everyone to Ruskin College on a TUC scholarship.

We have already seen that the consideration of one person's welfare is different to considering the welfare of the entire group to whom that same problem is common. The difference between the two is a political difference of the first magnitude for the reason that the activity of a group might benefit the group as a whole, or else may (by acting differently) benefit only one person, or one section, of the group. In the latter case, Olson's logic of collective action would ensure the speedy demise of the project. Which kind of activity is undertaken, what the payoffs are, and how the enterprise is run are all political decisions in their effect.

Many groups calling themselves self-help groups are in fact mutual-aid groups: a self-help group is a rather tenuous concept in the light of our philosophical researches to date - whether it is a solidary relationship or simply a coalition of individuals is open to question. Many groups would consider the distinction irrelevant to them, but that does not make it irrelevant to us.

CHARITIES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Two other concepts, of charity and of community group, can be dealt with at this point. Supposedly, a charity is composed of people acting altruistically, for the benefit of people outside the membership of their group. In Britain, charity is a legal term, but the status of charity law is such that a great many groups with charitable status are set up to benefit their own members, which is perfectly legal as long as the benefit is not in the form of direct monetary payments. The law states that nobody who manages a charity can derive any financial benefit from it - but the law makes no mention of any benefit other than financial ones. So industrial democracy is illegal in a charity, as workers cannot manage or vote on policy decisions. Yet we know that charitable status is acquired by many groups whose purpose is to benefit their members, albeit non-financially. The reason for this is simply that there is no special status given to any non-profit making group unless they are a charity (though recently common-ownership co-operatives have been given the opportunity to qualify for a lower rate of corporation tax). So unless a group is prepared to pay tax on all donations, subscriptions and other resources as if they were income, there is no choice but to become a charity. And one of the restrictions on charitable status is that no charity can become involved in political action or campaign for changes in the law, be their reasons disinterested or otherwise. According to our analysis, a mutual-aid group is inherently political in some senses. So doublethink is the standard in many mutual-aid groups in that their legal status and their actual actions may be incompatible. That this doesn't aid coherence in either development of theories or analyses is obvious, but all we can do is report the reasons for this.

We have seen already that the term 'community' is very difficult to define, and the concept of a community group is an equally nebulous one. In its common usage, a community group is simply a group whose activities reflect the needs or express the aspirations and nature of the community in which it is situated. The vagueness arises from the use of the word 'community' in the expression. But much of the emphasis, the emotional content of the use of the term 'community group' comes from the implicit opposition with other, more rationalist organizations which are either profit-making or statutory. This is interesting because the original idea of a charity, and the rationale behind the privileged legal status charities enjoy, was to provide a similar legal division between types of organization on the basis of their commitment to either altruism or self-interest on the part of their members. As we have seen, this crude division leaves mutual-aid groups and community group sitting uneasily in either the charitable camp, with all its implications, or the commercial one, with its equally unsuitable official status. Yet not all community groups are mutual-aid groups, though a vast majority might well be. The classic case which springs to mind of a non-mutual aid community group is that of a group providing community benefits for others, who have no participation in the group themselves and are thus purely passive, such as voluntary meals-on-wheels services provided for old people.

So clearly the ideas of mutual-aid groups, self help, charities and community groups are not equivalent: yet some groups, despite the incompatibilities between the concepts can claim quite legitimately to be all four. Most Battered Women's Refuges, for instance, could say this. They usually have charitable status, and are also rooted in the local community. They derive their impetus largely from the idea of mutual aid between women, and also make a point of adopting self-help principles. (For instance, housing and rehabilitation after women leave a refuge to carry on on their own is usually left to individuals rather than being the concern of the group.)

THE STORY OF TOC

The confusions engendered by all these hidden differences in commonly used concepts is reflected by hidden differences in a group's idea of itself, and are well-known to many who have been involved in projects of many different kinds. A particularly clear case has been written up in an account of the demise of The Other Cinema (TOC) in the magazine 'Wedge', issue 2 of 1977, from which this reinterpretation and all quotes are taken. TOC was a group of people who had set up their own organization to show and distribute left-wing films denied normal cinematic channels for their audiences. Now workers' co-operatives are a clear cut case of a mutual-aid group designed to solve employment problems common to all the members, whether from the lack of other jobs or to further the opportunity to do work which the members see as being more fulfilling for them, but which they are not able to do through normal employment channnels. All the assets and any profits accrue to the group, not to the workers excepts as wages. A partnership is more self-help, since the assets are shared by the partners themselves, and the partnership is more often simply seen as a vehicle for individual careers. Partners do not typically regard themselves as being part of a group in the sense that they wouldn't be inclined to assume that they would automatically benefit from any activities of any other partner if they had not contributed themselves. TOC was neither of these two things though. Legally it was a charity, with fifteen workers and a council of management, who were, according to the constitution, responsible for decision making. The state of the law perhaps forced this structure on them, but in view of what happened later, it would probably not have been chosen if a little more thought had gone into the setting up procedures. For despite the nominal structure, the workers clearly saw themselves as working in a co-operative or collective of sorts, able to take decisions themselves. This assumption coexisted with the explicit structure

described above, in which a non-executive council took all decisions. This was made possible because

> "there was an unwillingness to appear authoritarian on their (the council of management's) part. It seemed that they felt guilty that they should make the decisions over people actually doing the work."

The council was apparently seen by all the people involved as a figurehead only. But at the same time

> "the existence of this higher authority - however nominal - prevented the TOC workers from taking the initiative over policy"

This was despite the fact that the workers were trying to run TOC collectively. It would seem that the infection of doublethink was not just on the surface but ran deeper - many of the workers were approaching decision-making on a purely individual basis.

> "Responsibility to TOC should have been more important ..... too often people used the collective to make their working lives more pleasurable, the main concern was with individual self-vision."

This tendency appears to have been aggravated

> "when the new exhibition staff joined the old distribution collective, that is, as employees hired to execute a preconceived project."

The group who originally worked on the project (TOC, that is) were clearly not envisaging a purely commercial operation. They regarded themselves as working partly at least for a much wider 'constituency' of film-makers and audiences whose needs were not being met by the established channels of film distribution and exhibition. In as much as they regarded themselves as answerable to this constituency, and attempted to solve the problem of channels of distribution by group activity not merely within their own worker grouping, but also by means of gaining the participation of the audiences and film-makers to whom they looked for support, there was a clear bias towards an artistic mutual-aid network from the very beginning. This was in addition to the mutualistic elements of co-operative working they tried to build into their own daily working structures.

The right legal framework for any particular mutual-aid group isn't easy to choose under even the most favourable circumstances, and the implications of becoming a charity were never fully considered by either the staff or council of TOC. The advantages were obvious: not simply tax concessions, but also the possibility of grants from the British Film Institute. The latter possibility clearly influenced the decision to have the council of management partly

> "made up of film makers who supposedly had enough experience and weight to their names to facilitate relationships with the BFI."

Nevertheless, being a charity created ambiguities in the decision-making process and a vacuum of responsibility which turned out to be a greater disadvantage than not gaining charitable status could ever have been.

A third role of TOC we have touched on conflicted with the mutualistic and charitable elements - that of an employing organization. New staff were hired to exhibit films who were legally and technically possessed of the same status as the 'old

guard' who had been involved since the conception of TOC, but in practice were 'mere' employees.

> "The division between exhibition and distribution was one between doers and thinkers, a sort of intellectual hierarchy rather than an official one."

There are at least three separate problems which may have occurred here. It is always difficult for new people to join an existing project, especially a closely-knit and selfconsciously crusading one, and fit in with the way it works. It is equally difficult for the originators and founders of such a project to share decision making with newcomers and involve them fully in the ideas and working of the group. The first problem is due partly to inexperience, which is inevitable, and partly through lack of confidence any person feels when placed in a situation in which they know less and can do less than their peers. The second problem is due to feeling of possessiveness, guardianship and jealousy on the part of established members, as well as often well-founded worries about how to maintain vision, standards and priorities, not to mention power. Both these problems were exacerbated in this case by the fact that decision making lay in theory with the council of management, whose nominal powers to supervise these areas easily became a smokescreen concealing the true state of affairs. The third problem is that the role of an employing organization is very different from a group of people trying to put their own ideas into practice, since employees are there to put other peoples' ideas into practice rather than their own. As a generalization from both this and other similar cases, it is almost inevitable that employing new people in circumstances where there are powerful hidden structures and hidden agendas, and when informal (in the covert sense) relationships are the major ones in the way decisions are taken and plans laid, will be unsatisfactory and possibly disastrous

unless there is an attempt to establish clear and overt statement of what the jobs entail, who is doing the employing, and who holds what responsibilities - in short, the secret sections must be brought into the open for all to see. Non-distorted communication must be attempted. In the case of TOC, all this went by default.

TOC eventually closed down with much controversy when the British Film Institute turned down a grant application for £25,000. Clarke and Elliot, the two participants in TOC who wrote the 'Wedge' article which is the source of this story, say that the BFI "is in fact responsible for TOC's closure". The political issues they discuss are certainly interesting, and revolve around the role of the state in relation to the arts. But in the context of the discussion of organization here, the closure was clearly traceable to the internal contradictions within TOC which went unresolved, and are equally political. The crux of the crisis was of course economic, but the economics of mutual-aid groups are different to the economics of charities and to the economics of businesses. The difference doesn't lie in the fact that the balance sheets add up differently, but in the economic strategy adopted.

To elaborate this point, the strategy for a business is to charge for goods or services and thereby cover the necessary costs in providing them, including return on capital and the wherewithal for life and ideally for luxury. For a charity, the strategy is to cover costs by obtaining donations: there is no question of charging what the market will bear in all cases because, unlike businesses, charities aren't simply providing a service but meeting a need. The difference is one of approach. For a mutual-aid group, the economic strategy rests entirely on the development of group solidarity in response to group need as a way of cutting financial costs, and either charging subscriptions to meet a deficit, charging for services, or soliciting donations. To put the differences more simply: businesses tap markets, charities tap goodwill, and mutual-aid

groups tap the efforts of their members.

The strategy of TOC was sufficiently hybrid to fall into none of these categories, and it went down every possible road to ruin. It failed as a business because nobody recognized the need for

> "adequately investigating the economics of exhibition"

and TOC couldn't tap a market it hadn't researched properly. It failed as a charity because nobody recognized the need for public relations necessary for any charity to obtain donations from as wide an area as possible, and fell into over-dependence on the patronage of the BFI.

> "A very thorough PR job would have been needed to overcome their reputation for inefficiency and bad credit, but this wasn't done because of their woolly collective."

and thus TOC couldn't tap goodwill it had alienated rather than cultivated. Lastly, they failed as a mutual-aid group because they never really tried to make explicit, both to themselves and to the outside world, what kind of group they were and who they were benefiting. There were actually two equally feasible bases for a mutual-aid group which might have worked: either as a film workers' co-operative, or as a film goers' consumer group. The former would still have needed adequate business management but the boundaries and resources would have been clearer, whilst for the second strategy to have succeeded they ought really to have built up enough solidarity amongst audiences to either raise charges, use voluntary effort to cut those costs which had to be bought from outside, or else get a pressure group of some sort going to force grants out of some body or other. The fact that BFI was left holding the baby, in the sense that they were made

responsible for the survival of TOC, was simply because grant-giving authorities do tend to be the line of least resistance for groups who are unclear about what else they could do, and it is such a line that is taken in default of positive decisions to do something else. The circumstance of the closure is thus attributable at least in part to the inability of TOC to decide what type of group they really were, and this was clearly an internal matter (albeit an intensely political one). The eventual external political fracas was a direct result of this failure.

This isn't to say that the BFI were either justified or correct in refusing to pay an ongoing grant, or that they had no hidden motives of their own for wanting to see the activities of TOC cease for ever. The point we are making here is that the eventual closure at some point was a logical consequence of the political vacuum which existed where there should have been a clear idea of what sort of organization TOC was to have been. And it is necessary if we are to see this clearly just how businesses, mutual-aid groups and charities differ economically from each other. Taxonomies are useful not just to librarians and academics.

Purely as an aside, any person or group who does depend economically on grants from someone, even if the grant is a just entitlement, is putting the power they ought to wield by themselves for themselves into the hands of a body which doesn't have the same priorities. In the words of the song:

> "There was a young lady from Riga,
> Who went for a ride on a tiger.
> They returned from the ride
> with the lady inside,
> And a smile on the face of the tiger."

The lady from Riga might well have bought and paid for a ticket for that fateful ride she took, but her fate was nothing to do with justice either - the odds were against success if not the

first time then subsequently. Tiger-riding is an inherently unsafe method of transport.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

But I digress. We've used the story of The Other Cinema as an illustration of the utility of the way we've been developing an idea of what a mutual-aid group is and is not, and what we look for in mutual-aid groups and related organizations. Assume - which is not a justified assumption, but one we make for its illustrative value - that TOC really wanted to be a mutual-aid group but failed (whatever that may mean, it has an intuitively obvious interpretation). We've pinpointed as possibly the crucial area of that failure the lack of clarity in terms of defining action. This is true of the failure to try and get a sensible and non-contradictory framework, true of the failure to absorb new workers, true of the failure to negate the damage done by the pseudo-management council and true of the failure to avoid dependence on the very establishment TOC was meant to be an alternative to. But what, practically, could have been done about any of this? Unless we can somehow point towards the form of an answer, our speculations are academic in the worst sense rather than the best.

The area that TOC, as a mutual-aid group, failed in was in the maintenance of the basis of the group. There was certainly a feeling of belonging amongst the original members, and an awareness that they could not act separately but only as a group, and co-operative action was certainly present. So the basis was there, there can be no doubt. What we can say, looking back on the history as we have presented it, was that there was no feedback, no commitment to operate in the reflexive manner that anarchist organizations do. The structures for communication on this level were absent. The reasons for this deficiency are perhaps clear in the story, but it is the effect we are talking about. The group never appeared to take time out to look at its

activities, membership or structures in relation to its original values and aims, and that is why those values and aims were in the end forgotten and unachieved. Even in a BFI-funded cinema they might not have been recovered.

What we shall look at next are issues related to this chapter: we saw that the BFI played a large part in the case of TOC. We look in the next chapter at the way the state relates to mutual aid groups, and the effects that contacts with state agencies might have on voluntary groups.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MUTUAL AID IN THE WELFARE STATE: CONTEXT

We've now reached the stage of having a decent analytical framework for the understanding of mutual-aid groups. However, any discussion of the relationships between such groups and the state is inevitably piecemeal for a number of reasons. Firstly, mutual-aid groups as an organizational form could be in any area doing almost anything, but the activities the state is concerned with are specific. As a result, the areas which we talk about are liable to make no great sense if we try to extract a pattern from them based on our arguments up till now: it is the state that determines the parameters of the discourse and the arena in which confrontations will occur. Hence we can't easily relate this to what has been discussed earlier, and the discussion will appear piecemeal. Secondly, the state itself is not homogenous. There is no single fixed policy towards voluntary groups in general, and mutual-aid groups in particular aren't considered at all differently. Different parts of the state do different things in different ways and with different motives. Though the state in its many guises is ubiqitous, it is incapable of governing everything, and mutual-aid groups tend to spring up in the holes in the woodwork, as it were, like mice. They exist in the parts the state has not been able to reach. The state is also full of contradictions itself, and government policies which may have a single guiding principle behind them turn out to be applied in many different ways by different people. And conversely, some state organs may apply policies with different principles behind them in identical ways. Theories of the state, whether anarchist,

marxist, liberal or whatever, may seem acceptable in a political or historical grand scale, but on the small scale which affects individual cases these unifying principles are full of exceptions and have an explanatory value which is inversely proportional to the remoteness of the alleged cause. 'Why' type explanations are really not as interesting as 'how' ones. Even if I believe the state is on the whole not a benevolent body, the fact remains that the people who act on its behalf are not malicious, and their actions too have to fit into this framework. Lastly, many mutual-aid groups exist in the social service area. This can be explained quite simply, for this area of activity is perhaps the furthest removed from rationalist criteria of success: and therefore more groups will start and survive in this field. The environment is less hostile, and questions of why things are done are relevant, while goal achievement - in particular profit - is correspondingly less important, and more subjective anyway. (Though it is becoming more common for social services to see themselves as delivering services to clients as units, and to measure efficiency in this sense.) Explicable though this is, it does give a misleading idea of the scope and potential of such a form of organization if we dwell on it as a unifying pattern. So once again, our approach has to be a piecemeal one.

Although in terms of the way we approach mutual-aid groups, relationships with the state are neither an essential nor a central part of our analysis, this in no way implies that the state is not important. The fact that our analysis here is piecemeal does not imply that we believe that a piecemeal approach to the state is capable of solving the problems that the state presents. Nobody could accuse anarchist theories of not dealing comprehensively with the state: but we have not sought to develop a complete political theory here. The fact that we haven't made the state a central part of our arguments, and the fact that we don't believe any theory which does so can do anything to aid our insight into what organized human behaviour would be like without the state, is purely a result of the fact

that our sociology of mutual aid is independent of statist ideology. That the state and its effect on groups is important here and now is unarguable, but this doesn't mean that we have to shackle ourselves by making it the key to all we write, think and do.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE STATE

This piecemeal approach to relationships between voluntary organizations and the state is best contrasted with unified conspiracy/incorporation approaches. A good example of this is found in John Dearlove's 'The control of change and the regulation of community action', in Part I of 'Community Work One' ed. Jones and Mayo. Dearlove's basic thesis is that the relationship between groups and the state is analogous to that between individual claimants and welfare agencies. Dearlove points out how the rules and regulations governing welfare payments

> "do not float free of the economic and social structure, and the system of welfare benefits enforces and polices the work system ..... A pool of low paid labour is encouraged and low paid work is enforced. A work ethic is propagated by these rules, and still more by the culture of humility which greets claimants. The stress is on self-support, family support and individual solutions in a free market. The effect is to keep individuals off the state and in the private sector, and in this the state is helped by the social work profession."
> (op.cit, p.24)

The relationship of the state with groups is seen by Dearlove as similar.

> "Ideally they are keen for groups to assume a role which helps them in the provision of services for which there is an established demand, but failing this they are happy if groups assume a self-help role so that they provide for themselves without any recourse to public assistance. The state desires subjects, clients, supporters and helpers, not masters, customers, demanders and disrupters"
> (ibid)

Now I wouldn't seek to quarrel with any of this, within limits. What I would quarrel with is the way this vision constricts us. It may be true that the state desires subjects and helpers rather than masters or disruptors, but that doesn't mean that we have to be one or the other. To form a group which can function independently of the state is being neither one nor the other. Of course, many left-wing state socialists would claim that if you are doing something which the state could do but is not doing, you are supporting the state: but this isn't true for those of us who don't share the assumptions. It is obviously nonsensical from an anarchist point of view to force the state into control over yet more areas of our lives when we could organize ourselves to do the same. For Dearlove, this possibility is not considered. The main type of situation he considers are those where

> "community action groups concerned to force change and innovation on the authorities experience considerable difficulty in surviving and in maintaining their radical direction ..... community action groups may

> come to provide for themselves what they originally considered to be a need which should be seen as a right to be met fully and adequately by the state ..... ideally the authorities like groups which do more than just help themselves; they like groups which actually come to help government by assisting in the provision of a service for which there is an established and recognized demand."
> (ibid. p.32-33)

Dearlove's example of the housing situation in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea illustrates his point perfectly by charting the progression from pressure group to service provision.

The key to seeing what is wrong with seeing all voluntary groups as either opposing the state by making demands on it (in which case they usually fail) or assisting the state by working with it (in which case they usually become incorporated) is to remind ourselves that the state is part of the problem, and not part of the solution. Our ideal is to do without the state entirely. If we put ourselves in a position where, by our own analysis, we end up being co-opted, we have only ourselves to blame. Our aim is to do without the state. As a social construct, it will go away if it is ignored - its existence and power lies in the minds of people, at least in so far as it needs them to both obey and enforce its laws and regulation. That ignoring the state is unlikely to be enough by itself is probable: but this doesn't imply thatwe have to look to it for solutions. So though according to left-wing statist ideologies Dearlove's analysis is quite correct, it is inadequate if our aim is to build alternatives to the state rather than capture it. It is clearly unjust for the state not to provide those services which we have a right to, but the aim of the state is not to be just, and we should not judge it as if it were. The essence of the state is

its unfairness. It is about protecting inequalities, not eliminating them. Just as power stations are driven by differences in energy - entropy, it is called - so the state is driven by differences in people, that is,power.

THE POSSIBILITY OF WORKING WITH THE STATE

The question we have to ask ourselves is whether the fact that the government has the ability to co-opt groups which try and work with it means that it is fundamentally impossible for groups to work with the state structure under any circumstances. Or, under what circumstances (if any) can contact with the state not lead to cooption or incorporation? Most of the discussion of the role of the state in relation to voluntary groups comes from community workers: the 'Community Work' series of books in which the Dearlove article appears is edited and published by the Association of Community Workers, and a large amount of equally insightful material was published by the various CDP groups during the 1970's. But ultimately, the profession of community work depends on the state for its existence, and community workers depend very largely on the state for their livelihood, either directly or indirectly. Their existence is based on the premise that there is a role for community workers and community work in relation to voluntary organizations. The well-known agonized self-doubt of community workers concerns whether they prop up the existing structure of the state, or whether they seek to change it: and if they seek to change it, how effective they could possibly be in promoting that change. Were community workers to adopt our point of view - that the aim is to live without the state - then their discussions would be rather different. It seems likely that the adoption of left-wing state socialist philosophies of various types by community workers isn't a result of any serious consideration and rejection of the anarchist alternative because to consider that alternative isn't simply to ask where community work is going, but also calls into

question whether it can go anywhere at all. At least the ideologies of state-based social change offer a rationale for employees of the state. In this context, it is worth noting that Dearlove maintains, rather like Michels, that the poor are politically inert and so (one assumes) need community workers to mobilize them. He blames this on an ideology of 'self-help'. We have already seen that self-help and mutual-aid are very different, and that the essence of mutual-aid is mobilization. Clearly the need to find a role for themselves as professionals plays as large a part in the writings of community workers as does any objective aim of seeking improvements in society and social change. This isn't a bad thing: it would be nice if doctors and lawyers spent as much time working out their own role in society as community workers do. But this does account for the bias towards working through the state to change itself that one finds in writings from community work sources. And as a result, the question we are asking here - whether it is possible at all for groups to work with the state - is one which cannot be discussed as freely because one answer to it is a form of professional suicide, and as such would be difficult to contemplate for community workers. Any way of contemplating the subject which does involve community workers in a constructive role must necessarily involve social change via the state, because that is the employer of most of them.

As a matter of fact the role of the state is not a uniform one. All the tactics described by community workers for the state to use in relation to community groups - challenges to provide services followed by cooption, forcing them into conflict strategies to provide an excuse for repression and so on - are no doubt used at different times by different government agencies. But these agencies, within both central and local government, differ so widely in the reasons they have for being in contact with voluntary bodies, and in their consequent concerns, that it is possible to identify what the effects of such contacts will be, and what effect it will have on any group. By no means all

the effects will be harmful, or permanent: and it is possible to limit degrees of involvement. At the same time, a mutual-aid group with some amount of self-knowledge will be able to see what those effects will be, and what the extent of any involvement is likely to be.

REGULATORY CONTACT WITH THE STATE

To illustrate this with an example: we have seen that all mutual-aid groups have some kind of legal framework, and this necessarily involves contact with government departments. We discussed an account of The Other Cinema earlier, in which the legal framework adopted did little to help the organization, and it is not unknown for the Income Tax Inspectorate in Scotland and the Charity Commissioners in England to ask for changes in a group's constitution. Registration of one type or another is an obvious contact which most voluntary groups go through, and many face some kind of inspection as well. For those groups with charitable status, annual accounts have to be submitted to the relevant authorities, who also have the right to terminate the status of the group should the inspection of the accounts reveal anything which breaks the charitable guidelines. However, this power is strictly limited, and its impact can be foreseen. Though it is true that an inappropriate status can be chosen which may lead to difficulties within the organization itself, the requirements of registration and inspection are as purely formal as one can get. It is possible to see what one is liable to become involved in, and the fact that clear limits are built into this type of contact means that it doesn't have to lead to any enforced changes in the way the group is run, which cannot be predicted. That in the case of a charity these may be wide-ranging (I'm thinking of the prohibition of political activities by charities) doesn't make the limited nature of the contact less clear. The predictable nature of such a contact makes it possible to plan to overcome the limits. Thus organizations like NCCL and

Release, which do want both charitable status and the ability to campaign for changes in the law, are able to plan for two parallel organizations working for the same end, one of which is charitable and the other political. This may be inconvenient, but it can be foreseen, and because the contact with government is strictly defined, unintended incorporation can be avoided.

Other contacts of the registration/inspection type are more positive, even though they are with government departments. Conforming with fire regulations, or the Health and Safety at Work Act cannot be said to have a harmful effect on the way an organization operates, and may well do it some good. Playgroups have to be registered with a local authority, who make an inspection to ensure that children are looked after properly: again, this does no harm. All these requirements are formal in the sense that their effect and the requirements for registration are both limited in advance and public knowledge. Given their limited nature, the effect of such contacts between voluntary groups and the state is surely uncontentious. Other contacts of such a limited nature may be of direct financial advantage to a voluntary group. They may range from rate reductions for charities from the local council, through entitlement to use school premises free of charge for local community groups, to governments grants available for new businesses (as of right) in development areas, and tax allowances of various kinds from the inland revenue. These contacts aren't simply a matter of registration or of inspection like the others, but may confer financial benefits and even direct government grants. But the point is that they are limited by law and mandatory. Everybody knows exactly where they are at all times. Whatever the indirect effects on a mutual-aid group (such as greed influencing choice of legal framework or location) the effects of government contacts, like those relating to registrations, are formally limited and automatic: and if they turn out to be bad effects, those particular instances aren't really explicable as examples of a conspiracy by the state to do nasty things to voluntary

groups. Which isn't to say that persecution cannot happen, merely that the law governs it.

So given the fact that limited, formal and legally-governed contacts between voluntary groups and agents of the state are both inevitable and (even when they result in grants) often predictable, we can draw the conclusion that it is the informal and discretionary elements in contacts with government which may lead to problems of unintended consequences, displacement of goals and incorporation or cooption. There are basically two types of discretionary contact between the state and voluntary group. The first (and more common) type is where the state, as embodied in a central or local government agency, sees itself as being in partnership with a voluntary group, and the second type is where the role isn't that of partner as much as initiator, or parent - so-called pump-priming schemes being an example.

THE STATE AS PARTNER: BACKGROUND

Before going into detail on the role of the state as a partner, it will be necessary to go into a small amount of autobiography. It may have been noticed that up till now, the amount of empirical work reported here has been relatively small. I've tried to use cases reported in the publicly available literature wherever possible to illustrate points rather than my own research experiences. At the same time, all the theoretical work was being constantly illuminated by contacts, usually on an informal basis, with people from various groups in the voluntary sector (that is non-statutory). At this stage there was no conception of mutual-aid groups as a voluntary form of organization. The need for such a concept arose partly through the observation that there were many different types of organizations in the voluntary sector which couldn't all be subsumed under the same model. One of the main concerns early on in my research career - this was during 1976 to 1978 - was the effect of government funding on groups in the voluntary sector. I

drew up a chart outlining the nature of a voluntary group as I saw it then, the effects of government funding and the way this resulted in incorporation and the destruction of the basis of the group. Most of the points in that chart have been dealt with here in considerably greater detail and with a much greater theoretical base, so I shan't embarrass myself by reproducing it. I distributed a few thousand of these up and down Scotland with a message stating what I was trying to find out, and asking for feedback from recipients, with any information which might be considered useful in shedding light on the processes described. Although this did not work terribly well, I paralleled this activity with visits to some government bodies which funded voluntary groups as well as some voluntary groups which were in receipt of funds or, like Councils of Social Service, knew a lot about them. It was during this investigation that I came to the conclusion that research into the effects of grant aid on voluntary bodies could be little more than a narrative account of particular instances with no systematic theory behind it, and was a red herring in the sense that it would be useless for any explanatory or predictive value. This was for two reasons. The first was that the term 'voluntary body' was in the first place undefined and in the second place covered organizations of such radically different nature that no definition was possible. This work has been concerned with refining a part of that concept and bringing out some of the problematic areas for what later emerged as mutual-aid groups (or voluntary organizational form). The second reason why the subject as defined turned out to be a red herring was one we have referred to above: that there are differences and contradictions in the way different parts of government approach various groups, and these tend to make generalizations impossible, especially when combined with the varieties of voluntary groups.

What I will do now is to present the data that was gathered mostly during that stage of the research, together with the interpretation that hindsight gives. Everything I did then makes

much more sense to me now, and I have no doubts about the accuracy of the interpretation; but it has not been possible to do that phase of the research again. Consequently, though its value is undoubted and the principles are now clear, the data on which it is based is less recent than the theory we have developed here since then. There were three sources of government funds compared: two local authority and one central government. The two local authority bodies were both in Lothian Region, and were the Social Work Department and the Community Education Department, whilst the central government body was the Social Work Services Group of the Scottish Education Department.

LOTHIAN REGION SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

The Lothian Region Social Work Department had a composite budget for all types of funding which was administered by the Combined Services section of the department, responsible for outside bodies.. About a third of this went on groups doing 'agency' work in the sense that the local authority had a statutory duty to provide certain services and fulfilled this by making grants to outside bodies to do it for them. Another large amount went to the established voluntary groups found in any local authority area, such as Councils of Social Service and bodies with an established pedigree of worthiness but no endowment. I was unable to obtain information on precisely how the rest of the money was spent, but there was at that time no clear machinery or priorities for awarding grants. The Combined Services Officer did tell me that the criterion was not what the voluntary organization in question needed, but who it helped. It was services that were funded, not groups. The way that grants were obtained was simply via a letter of application processed through the Director of Combined Services in the Department and the relevant council subcommittee. The Director of the Edinburgh Council of Social Service said that there was a lot of cynicism in the voluntary sector about the whole process, that many groups

found it necessary to inflate the budgets for the services they provided to get a grant to cover their needs, and that there was a degree of pot-luck about the whole business. Annual reviews made rational planning impossible, and the review procedure itself was haphazard, in some cases consisting of a simple phone call asking 'how are you getting on?'. It must be emphasized that this account is not current, and is simply what was occurring then. Regionalization in Scotland was new, and the original plan for five voluntary organization liason officers was reduced to one. At the same time, the fact was that most voluntary groups funded by the social work department appeared to believe that the main criteria for getting a grant were firstly, that you had had one before, and secondly, that the people responsible for giving the grant liked you. With hindsight, the reason for this was simple. It was that the Social Work Department, though responsible for funding voluntary organizations, simply saw itself as funding the services they provided rather than the organizations themselves. Voluntary organizations were a means to an end, and were thus transparent (in a sense) to the Social Work department. It was this institutionalized lack of interest in the voluntary bodies as organizations which was responsible for their dissatisfaction with the whole process.

LOTHIAN COMMUNITY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Compared to the Social Work Department, the Lothian Region Community Education Department was a model of clarity. They issued guidelines on their grants, application forms to fill in and tried to make everything as easy as possible. The stated criteria for grants were firstly, on whether an area's educational needs were being met: secondly, on the size of the membership: and lastly, on their range of activities. The procedure was not administered through a separate part of the council bureaucracy, but used the existing structure of the Community Education Department, with additional co-ordinators

where necessary for things like playschemes. The Community Education Department had been formed by a post-regionalization amalgamation of the old Adult Education and Youth and Community Departments, and was responsible for all adult and youth education and leisure needs. The whole structure worked smoothly, as near as could be seen. Unlike the Social Work Department, the Community Education Department recognized the value of organizations in the community as well as the services they carried out, and were interested in both. One of the more interesting examples of the attitudes of the Community Education Department was in their funding of the Lothian Playschemes Forum. Playschemes are for school-age rather than pre-school children, and are run not by parents but by playleaders. They are also non-contributory, with the main aim of giving children something to do during the holidays: playschemes funded by local authorities are a feature of life in most cities these days. The Lothian Playschemes Forum was a grouping of all the schemes in the Region, and had arisen as a response by playschemes to the changes brought about by regionalization. All individual applications were processed by the forum, which had representatives from all the schemes. At one meeting I attended, over one hundred people were present, many of whom were playleaders of schemes. The grants for all playschemes were given as a lump sum to the Forum, which then divided it up and sent out cheques to individual schemes. The meeting I had been to was for the planning of the summer 1977 schemes, which numbered around fifty in the Lothians. However, the Forum had no officials or constitution. It was, in all respects, an informal forum. While the Community Education Department clearly preferred to deal with one meeting of all playschemes than have to deal with each one individually, they were worried that the lump grant wasn't being used to best effect when the details of how it was allocated were outside their control. The Community Education officials didn't like outside leaders or paid volunteers, believing that all labour in playschemes ought to come from the local community, in

line with the grant aid policy we outlined above. But given that tens of thousands of children were using the playschemes it was difficult to deny that there was some value in what was going on, and the only sanction would have been to refuse to deal via the Forum and have stricter requirements for each playscheme with the sanction of removing grants. Since withdrawing grants would result in a mass lobbying of individual councillors on the Region (the Forum did have very convincing mobilization of public opinion , which was efficient enough to restore cuts in the playschemes budget in 1977 at least) as well as turning out thousands of teenagers with nothing to do, the Community Education Department was effectively squeezed into inaction. This was despite their expressed opinion that the value and the spontaneity of schemes was being destroyed by the use of money to employ outsiders. So, remarkably, in this instance at least, the playschemes forum had more say in the grant than the grant-aiding authority did. Undoubtedly the effective mobilization of public support and pressure on elected representatives had a lot to do with this, but the conditions which allowed this to happen were created by the Community Education Department themselves. Their objection wasn't to the service provided, but to the way it was provided - to the organization of the playschemes. But at the same time they weren't funding the way the playschemes were organized, but were funding the schemes themselves. Therefore they couldn't affect one without having to invoke sanctions on the other. It is obvious that the political process can be used as a lever against bodies accountable to elected representatives, but there has to be a point into which this lever is inserted. The point of insertion in this instance was provided by the split between the service and the way the service was run. The fact was that the Forum acted as a channel for funds for the service, but as a barrier for influencing the organization of it. And unlike Social work Departments, the Community Education Department did see organization as separate from service.

THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICES GROUP

Moving on to the central government body, the Social Work Services Group was a branch of the Scottish Education department, and was much more difficult to approach than either of the local authority bodies mentioned. The grant policy was laid out in a circular, and stated that the SWSG had the aim of encouraging services by voluntary organizations of benefit to Scotland as a whole. No bodies eligible for local authority aid were also eligible for SWSG assistance (whether or not they actually got any). Incidentally, the two local authority departments also tried to avoid overlap and dual funding. Six categories were listed for grants. They included headquarters activities of national bodies, specialist services for low-incidence need, pathfinding experiments, pump-priming demonstrations, training, and research. Most grants ran (usefully) for a three-year term. Central government money had a reputation of having fewer strings and constraints than any other sort, and this applied to the SWSG. However, it wasn't easy to get a grant in the first place. I came into contact twice with the SWSG. The SPPA Executive committee, with whom I did some work, was in receipt of a headquarters grant: and during 1978, a group which the late Professor John Spencer and myself were involved with had a grant application for research turned down owing to 'the methodology envisaged in the proposal not being adequate to explore satisfactorily the hypotheses put forward' (quote from the rejection letter). Neither of these two contacts was very productive, and the only account I have of the workings of the SWSG in practice came from one of the organizations they funded. This shall remain anonymous, but was a national Scottish organization supposedly acting on behalf a large disadvantaged minority grouping. It had been going for some thirty years, but during the last half-a-dozen of them was slowly dying. Originally it serviced a large number of local groups on a headquarters

basis, but this dwindled to simply organizing an annual conference, and then this failed too. The SWSG, which had been providing the money, suddenly woke up to the fact that the grant was being wasted and killed off the moribund remnants of the organization by withdrawing the grant. However, this somewhat precipitous decision was reversed. Lobbying by supporters of the group convinced the SWSG that if the group didn't exist it would be necessary to invent a replacement. The SWSG accepted this argument to the extent that they did agree to a one-year grant under new management to try and revitalize the organization. It had a low threshold of success - in other words,owing to the fact that it had actually been doing absolutely nothing for ages, almost anything was an improvement, and there was little difficulty in getting the grant continued. This constitutes an interesting example of the way funding was related neither to the services provided, nor the need. The voluntary body got away with doing nothing for some time, and yet the money kept rolling in. The reasons are not difficult to pick out. The main one is that for an HQ type of grant, the criterion is simple existence. Unlike the service orientation of a Social Work Department, or the educational and organizational orientation of a Community Education Department, the SWSG wasn't really capable of monitoring the use to which the money was being put. It apparently regarded the grant as an investment, rather than as consumption. By this I mean that while local authority groups budget from year to year and are in many ways concerned solely with the direct impact of the money they allocate, the SWSG were more concerned with the infrastructure and not with immediate dividends.

GENERALIZATIONS ON THE EFFECTS OF GRANTS

We can draw some fairly interesting conclusions from the three funding bodies and the cases outlined above. In the first place, it is clear that there is some amount of influence over a

grant-giving body because it is publicly accountable, as we saw from the Playschemes Forum. Such pressure does need to be highly organized to work properly. The tactics of pressure-group organization which this requires do, as we have seen, present certain problems for mutual-aid groups from an organizational point of view. However, we saw that these were largely a result of centralized lobbying tactics being incompatible with grass-roots activity. It is clear that the Playgroup Forum turned this, to some extent, on its head by turning the potentially centralizing influence of a central grant, which could have been dangerous because of the possibility of needing to administer it centrally, into a device for decentralized application of pressure by the individual groups which made up its membership. Contrasting this with the SWSG, where the pressure was largely within the establishment to maintain an established organization, and we see that the two cases are different. Additionally, whilst the Forum could influence the Community Education Department, it was still vulnerable to that whole department being cut, which was a possibility in Lothians at one stage. The Social Work Department was not apparently susceptible to either of these types of influence. This is due to the fact that social workers see themselves as making professional, expert decisions, and this is seen as incompatible with becoming influenced by pressure from outside.

This brings us to the major factor affecting grants to voluntary groups by the state in its various guises. We can put this in the form of a relationship: specificity in the grant is inversely proportional to flexibility in its use. This, I think, is a relationship that makes intuitive sense as well as covering all the facts. The specificity of the grant arises from two factors. The first is the purpose for which it is awarded, and the second is the practice of the grant-giving body. The first factor limits the use which a group can make of the grant, and the second limits the way any application of any money is carried out. If we apply this relationship to our cases presented here,

we see how this works out precisely. The Social Work Department was highly specific in the grants it gave to individual groups, and the uses to which they could be put. The fact was that the Social Work Department, like all social work departments, tended to be highly specific in its definition of what grants were to be used for, limited groups by restricting the social work remit to pure service provision. On the other hand, the Playschemes Forum was subject to less influence, direct or indirect, from the Community Education Department. In the first place, the grant was non-specifically directed in that it was a lump sum for the Forum to distribute itself.And in the second place, the remit of the Community Education Department was less specific than of Social Workers in that educational services are by their very nature less susceptible to objective assessment than social work services. Specific objections were therefore less easy for educationalists to make, and influence on groups correspondingly less severe. Specificity of the grant from the Social Work Services group was even less than from the Lothian Community Education Department. The grant was simply a headquarters grant, and not only did this mean that its use and application were virtually unlimited (since a headquarters is at liberty to define what its own services should be) but the added factor was that the funding body, unlike the Lothian Social Work Department regarding services and the Community Education Department as regards educational provision, could lay no real claim to superior technical or professional expertise in the use of the grant in any case.

PREDICTING CHANGES IN VOLUNTARY GROUPS

So the principle of inverse relationship between specificity of a funding body and freedom of action of a voluntary group does appear to hold good in the above cases and with the funding bodies described. Whilst this sample is admittedly a small one,

the hypothesis does have a lot of logic behind it. Clearly though, to develop the point further, there is bound to be a whole spectrum of specificity of grants. It makes sense to ask the further question: how can a group tell if a specific grant will affect it adversely? There is another paradigm of the dissolution of a voluntary group implied here, which was in the original chart on the effects of grant-aid which I used for the abortive attempt at remote-control research, but is here quoted in an alternative formulation from another anthology from the Association of Community Workers.

> "A grass roots anti-poverty organization might proceed through five phases:
> 1) the group comes into existence with a generalized commitment to improve the lot of the poor;
> 2) in order to obtain government funding, this commitment must be programmatic, for example the group will seek funds to open an office and run a Welfare rights Information Service;
> 3) the receipt of funding produces a division in the organization between those who now become full-time workers and other members who retire to a peripheral position reinforced by the idea that 'they're getting paid to do it; why should we work for free?';
> 4) the core group ceases to be dependent on grass roots involvement, since the future programme, as it is not defined, depends on satisfying the funding agency;
> 5) the group becomes an adjunct of the existing social services. Grass roots involvement is minimal."
> (from 'Criticism and Containment', Martin Loney, in 'Political Issues and Community

Work' ed. Curno, p.89)

Let us analyse the above group as a mutual-aid group. The basis of such a group isn't programmatic, but is based on feelings of belonging, a group ethic and co-operative action. The grant was a programmatic one with specific uses to which it was to be put: in particular, the funding of full-time workers. This undermined the group ethic since some of the group were earning a living from the group and others were not. This made it difficult to believe that all benefited equally from the grant, since the evidence of some drawing a wage and others receiving nothing clearly contradicted this belief. Feelings of belonging, which depend on a group ethic, are also eroded by the split into paid and unpaid group members, and co-operative action of the entire group is replaced by action only by the paid section. This paid section constitutes a sub-group whose basis is the grant which pays their wages, and once the unpaid members drop out, this becomes the basis of the group that is left behind. An unstated factor in Loney's five-phase plan is that this development of a full-time staff is often encouraged by the funding body who see it as evidence of growing professionalism. Could anything have been done to avoid the fate of the group described in the model Loney outlines?

The answer to this must be yes. Had the group opted for part-time work for all the members instead of full-time work for some, step three in the process would not have taken place. Additionally, step four is likely to have a diminished impact since part-time involvement would inevitably mean the programmatic element in the group would also be part-time. This would enable the basis of the group to remain intact. In short, anything which is liable to affect the group ethic by dividing benefits unequally should be approached with extreme caution as it might erode the belief that what benefits the group benefits all the members. Secondly, anything which affects feelings of belonging by dividing the group into distinct sections should

also be avoided: and thirdly, any activity which by its very nature cannot be undertaken co-operatively by all the group should also be avoided. If these three prescriptions are taken into account, the group will not be affected severely by a grant (or any other contact with the state). What we have done is simply to draw logical conclusions from the analysis we developed earlier in the thesis.

We can extend this set of arguments even further once we incorporate the distinctions between open and closed groups, and temporary and permanent members. We saw that there are particular problems associated with such groups. The need to solve these problems can appear suddenly under circumstances prompted by a contact with the state. For instance, since the early days of the first Job Creation Programme, voluntary bodies which have taken advantage of it have found that it has introduced divisions in the group where none existed before; that a group with permanent members finds itself with temporary ones, or a closed group finds itself with members who have violated its boundaries to gain admittance when they never even realized these boundaries existed. This can also lead to role changes - becoming employers can clearly become a case of a voluntary group being coopted by the state if the group internalizes the view of itself as existing simply to to administer JCP's. Contacts with the state can open up career opportunities for people within groups, who use the organization as a ladder of upward mobility - many community workers are erstwhile community activists. This too can create divisions in the group, if some of the members are seemingly using it to feather their own nests. And above all, a programmatic type of grant can tempt a group by its availability, and they may dive head-first into activities which they would not have considered worthwhile if there were not money attached. Self-knowledge is the only way of planning changes and deciding whether the risk is too great. The more specific the contact, the greater the need for finding out whether the specific ideas of the state agency coincide with your own.

Ultimately the issue is one of control and power versus trust. Any contact at all with a government body has built into it the possibility of the payer of the piper calling the tune. This can sometimes be indiscriminate, vicious and self-righteous. The tenure of Horace Cutler as Chairman of the Greater London Council offered the most notorious cases of this - any group that contravened Cutler's idiosyncratic and right-wing views and beliefs was liable to be chopped. The National Theatre was only the most famous case (see Loney op.cit p.96). There is no way to avoid victimization of this kind whether one receives government money or not, and all a grant does is offer the additional sanction of its withdrawal. Consequently, there is always going to be a balance of trust with control. At one extreme there will be no acceptance of any grant and a trust that the registration type of contact (fire, insurance, etc) will not be used to close the group down. At the other extreme, a group may get a large grant and trust the government agency not to withdraw it or abuse the power it gives them. In this latter case the need to avoid giving an excuse may affect the behaviour of the group in any case. Generalization is impossible. My own opinion is that the state is not to be trusted far, but this is due to the capriciousness of the economic and political system rather than malice - in most cases. And since the ideal of a mutual-aid group is to be in control of its own destiny, this unreliability is to be avoided. It is true that control over the use of government money is better that rejecting the opportunity of that control because control over use does not imply control over allocation. The ever-present danger is that of indispensability. Once the state becomes indispensable to the functioning of a group, that group ceases to have any potential as an alternative.

PUMP PRIMING: THE STATE AS INITIATOR

The other role of the state in relation to voluntary group isn't that of a partner but of an initiator. The idea of pump-priming is quite a widespread one, and underlies much current community work practice as well as much recent history of government grants (such as Urban Aid and CDP). There is no doubt that the belief that this role is in any way different to the partnership model is illusory. Central government pump-priming is only pump-priming in the sense that local government is expected to take over once the grant has expired. This was true of Urban Aid (which was largely central government money) as well as of the Community Development projects, and is more dangerous for voluntary bodies than simple partnerships. This is because not only is there a current accountability to the funding body, but also a future accountability for current activities when alternative sources have to be looked at. The only useful type of pump-priming is when the money is used for capital expenditure, because this does not then apply. Incidentally, pump-priming by charitable trusts is subject to the same constraints. Uncertainty is equivalent to discretion, and discretion is often capricious, and therefore not to be trusted. And without trust, one should not surrender control.

This chapter has been a little pessimistic in parts about the possibilities of mutual aid groups flourishing in the welfare state. We redress this balance in our final part, when we discuss the work and experiences of the Scottish Pre-school Playgroups Association. We have left SPPA till the end because they represent the closest thing to an empirical justification for this thesis as it has been possible to find. The story of SPPA is basically an optimistic one because it is about people who have not only put into effect a lot of the things we have been saying about mutual aid groups up to now, but have done so independently, building their own practice and theory as they went along. (Kropotkin would have been proud for them, not least because most of them probably have never read a word that he wrote). At the same time, the illustration is not a perfect one:

but it is decisive in establishing the viability of mutual aid as a practical possibility for organizing human activity.

PART FOUR

CHAPTER TWELVE

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THE SCOTTISH PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUPS ASSOCIATION

The Scottish Pre-school Playgroups Association (SPPA) is a most remarkable organization from any theoretical point of view. Possibly according to some organization theorists it ought not to exist at all: and if it does, it ought not to be stable and therefore should be unsuccessful. Yet SPPA has not only been in existence for some 15 years in its present incarnation (and for some time before that as a part of the now-English PPA which, it must be stressed, is an entirely different organization to which none of what follows may apply in either part or in full) but has been growing all through this time. Through all this, the average time any one person has been a member is around two years - and on the Scottish Executive Committee the two year rule is built into the constitution - and at every level there is no permanent or professional management.

The levels of SPPA are many and autonomous. The basis of the organization is a playgroup. These join together to form branches, and the branches form districts. The districts come together in regions, and the regions combine in the Scottish Executive Committee (SEC) and its associated sub-committees. There are both formal and informal links with the English and Northern Ireland PPAs, and both European and intercontinental contacts on an international level. (We will return to the structure in more detail later on). In Scotland alone during 1980, some 1500 playgroup members of SPPA between them catered for the pre-school education of around 30,000 children under five

years old, and trained either formally or informally about 15,000 other people, mostly parents. All this has been occurring spontaneously. The role of the different arms of the state has been inconsistent both in time and area, and has not always been positive. In those cases where it has been positive, that role has been supportive and reactive rather than initiating any action. Throughout, the management, execution and initiative has come mostly through the parents of the children involved. Our contention that this phenomenon is worth looking at as an example of mutual aid in action and as a testing ground for exploring the value of the theoretical discussions we went into earlier is surely not a surprising one. And, whether or not it is desirable for the same organizational principles to be used to structure other areas of social life apart from pre-school education, the possibility of this occurring is surely a reasonable area for speculation.

The purpose of this chapter is primarily descriptive, in that we shall be looking at the form of SPPA, the way the organization works and what it does. Inevitably, some of the facets of SPPA that we look at would not be at all significant were we using a different perspective, and other facets of SPPA which might be of interest from other points of view will be ignored - in particular, we will not be concerned with the quality of pre-school education provided by playgroups as compared with other types of provision. This is not to imply that the area is not of interest and still less should it be taken as any indication that this is an area which would bear unfavourably on the Playgroup movement. The only reason for this and other omissions is that they is not essential to the thesis under development, not that they are unimportant. Postgraduate research is of necessity limited in the resources available to carry it out, in the time available to it and in its subject matter: there should be no need to apologize for any limitations this imposes on its scope, once such limitations are acknowledged.

At this point I wish to go into the history of my own involvement in SPPA, and to outline the way that the information and data presented here and in the following chapter were obtained. During the winter of 1976-77, I had narrowed the field of my work to that of voluntary organizations in general, and was involved in visiting as many of them in the Edinburgh area as would see me. These visits were purely of an exploratory nature, and though the experience and information I gained through them was to be instrumental in shaping the ideas developed here, those insights were personal rather than objective, and writing them up in full here would serve no useful purpose. It was apparent that close contact with one or more of these groups would be the only method of obtaining the empirical data and developing the insight into members' motivations which seemed necessary to incorporate into an adequate research project.Of the contacts and relationships subsequently developed, those with SPPA were to prove the most fruitful and long-lasting, and the most suitable for incorporation into a written work.

There are a number of pertinent reaons for this, which are of direct interest both for methodological reasons and because of the light they shed on the subject matter. A brief digression into a couple of my less successful attempts at fieldwork will be essential here.

UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS AT RESEARCH

One of the groups with which I was involved for some while was the local Womens' Aid. For nearly a year I maintained close contact with the people involved, and gained a lot through the relationship. However, over time the relationship deteriorated for a number of reasons. Firstly, I was purely an observer - a research student pure and simple. I didn't actually have anything to contribute or do, and this made me feel parasitic and useless. In the type of work which Women's refuges undertake, emotional currents run high at the best of times, and I was unable to

handle my own reactions. Secondly, I was a man in a group otherwise consisting entirely of women, whose own work revolved entirely around the relationships between the sexes. I was excluded from the refuges themselves, and also from some group meetings on this basis. Not only did this limit the scope of any investigation, but also made clear to me that it was probably not a good idea to try and do any work with a group whose members and beneficiaries were ones who were inherently and necessarily different: I could not easily put myself in their position and neither could they forget my presence, or even accept it.Thirdly, I owed my original access to the group to a university contact, and there was clearly a difference of opinion in the group over whether my presence was a good thing. This was exacerbated by a fourth factor. The group itself appeared to be divided between two groups of differing motivations: at the time I mentally tagged them 'feminists' and 'do-gooders', but though the tags are immediately understandable, they are unfair. The difference was between women whose motivation was primarily humanitarian, and those whose motivation was primarily political. My impression since through reading about refuges, and talking with active members of other groups as well as women in the Womens' Liberation Movement is that this phenomenon is not a unique one: I know it is not confined to the Womens' Aid groups, since I have seen it in other places also (such as Welfare Rights groups).

This is a factor which clearly makes it difficult to operate a mutual-aid group. It is possible for members of either faction in any group where such a division exists to feel no sense of belonging to such a group, but merely to be using it to gratify humanitarian instincts, or alternatively to further political ambition. Though the Edinburgh Women's Aid group did not suffer from this, the policy of various left-wing political groups to enter organizations and try to incorporate them into a wider movement is ultimately destructive to any specific feeling of belonging the group may have developed. It frequently leads also to disagreement over policy questions, which undermines

commitmemt to group action.

In any such situation, people polarise and sitting on fences isn't safe. Not only was I a member of neither group, but I also owed my access to one group, who accepted me more than the other did. In the short term at least, my position was quite impossible, and adding up all the problems, of doubtful value either to myself or, more importantly, to the women themselves. Clearly, the combination rendered Edinburgh Womens' Aid unsuitable for prolonged empirical investigation, however useful the experience may have been to the conception of ideas, or stimulating from the purely subjective point of view.

At the same time that I was going to meetings of EWA, I also became involved in a co-operative bookshop in Edinburgh, and through that in the co-operative movement in Scotland generally. The contrasts with Womens' Aid could not have been greater. I was committed personally to co-operatives, and far from being primarily a research student, the probability is that I would have become involved in the Edinburgh Books Collective in any case. I was a full member of the group in my own right, and was certainly neither useless nor parasitical. None of the problems encountered at EWA arose here, but a different set of problems manifested themselves instead. I had no intention of going into action-research as a methodology. But the combination of deep involvement with participation and observation would have made it inevitable had I continued with the plan of incorporating an account in this thesis. I found that it was impossible for me to write about groups of which I was a member, in a report which I was writing in my role as a research student.

Whether or not action-research is a suitable methodology for postgraduate research is a separate question: but I felt it to be unsuitable for me. I was not working with a team and did not have a large body of established theory to call on. I did however have definite views and opinions, and these certainly had direct relevance to the course that I felt a new and growing mutual-aid group could take. At the same time I was working with people whom

I liked and with projects I was involved in, and did not feel able to use the group as a testing ground for my own ideas. I could only function properly if I could suspend my researcher status. The two roles did not mesh well together.

Secondly, my own involvements made me reluctant to write up my friends and our work as if it was simply a case study. The marriage guidance counsellor does not put video cameras in the marital bedroom as an aid to clients at work, and the social worker doesn't make their own family the subject of case conferences. I became, and still am, reluctant to use experiences I feel strongly about as material in a thesis, however valuable they may be: and I suspect that even though everyone knew I was involved in research into mutual-aid groups, colleagues in such ventures would regard such an attempt as skating on thin ice. Oddly enough, I have not felt such a reluctance to discuss and learn from my work with organizations such as Edinburgh Books Collective when the audience has been people working in other mutual-aid groups - perhaps because I regard it as a form of mutual aid between mutual-aid groups themselves, and therefore unexceptionable. This does not apply in the present case, or to the present audience. Perhaps it was naive of me to think it would have been possible in the first place.

SPPA IN CONTEXT

The Scottish Pre-school Playgroups Association gave rise to few problems. During my visits to various voluntary organizations, Willie Roe of the Scottish Council for Social Service suggested that SPPA would be a good place to visit as they had a highly-developed sense of organization (my recollection, not his exact words) and I found that to be true. I have forgotten who first suggested it, but someone mentioned that the Lothian Region Training Committee didn't have a treasurer, and was I interested in taking it on ? I agreed, and things developed from there. My status as a research student was no

problem - later it became a positive asset - and I had a definite job to do as well. The organization was old enough and well established enough to have a definite momentum of its own, and close enough to what I wanted to look at to justify involvement, but without having to feel personally responsible for what went on in the same way as had paralysed me earlier. I was involved on an as-needed basis as perceived by the other members. The fact that I wasn't the parent of a child at playgroup wasn't any problem or barrier at the level of the organization I was involved in. I never did become deeply involved in individual playgroups in the region, where this may have caused a problem. In short, none of the problems which arose in the two cases mentioned earlier arose with SPPA. The only drawback to the situation was that the dataset was limited: but later on, I became involved with the Scottish Executive Committee, and the biennial survey of playgroups throughout Scotland, which proved both highly illuminating and overcame any possible limitations of working with simply one group; the sample is in fact based on over 1000 groups, controlled for function.

Let us have a brief recapitulation of part of the ground we covered earlier. One of the reasons for developing a different way of looking at mutual-aid groups was because rationalist organization theories did not appear to deal properly with the ideas and values which play such a large part in their structure. Both Tonnies and Weber, and many since influenced by their thinking on this subject, drew a fundamental distinction between 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft' or, as Weber put it, 'Anstalt' and 'Verein'. Associative relationships have been seen as logically distinct from communal relationships, in that an organization can be either rational, purposive and goal-directed, or else based on common feeling, custom and friendship, but not both.

Amongst the things we have been saying is not only that a voluntary (in the third sense outlined earlier and contrasted with compulsory) organization is capable of bridging that gap,

but also that theories which presuppose the existence of a gap must be somehow faulty. A mutual-aid group may be both firmly based in the communal feeling of its members and at the same time be capable of rational and purposive behaviour. In so far as it exhibits this latter characteristic, it seems to be an organization like any other, and so it is only too easy to see the distribution of power and authority as being the most fundamental thing about it. This would be an error, because it takes no account of the essentially voluntary nature of such a group. What should be looked at is the relationship in such a group between ideas (which are apparently communal) and results (which are apparently purposive and associative). Feelings of belonging and belief in group interest lead directly to common action in a voluntary organization. So we shall look at the ideology of SPPA in this chapter, which should perhaps be regarded as a demonstration of the usefulness of looking at the links between theory and practice in voluntary groups above all other things. Apart from looking at that ideology, we shall also look at its practical manifestations, both in relation to SPPA structure and activities. We shall also begin to look at the ways in which the inadequacy of the orthodox theories of organization when applied to mutual-aid groups leads to tensions in the way they run. In all this, the coherence of the ideology in setting out the basis of communal feelings of belonging, belief in group interest and commitment to co-operative action is the fundamental tool of analysis.

PLAYGROUP IDEOLOGY AND BELIEFS

This ideology is set out in various places in playgroup literature - of which there is, incidentally, an enormous amount. We quote here from the SPPA leaflet entitled "Playgroups: Why? What? Where?". Whilst the leaflet is primarily intended to set out the provision for under-5's which SPPA provides - it says "a playgroups is one of several kinds of provision for children

under five" - the ideology of the organization is seen as central even in such an introduction. The leaflet goes on to say:

> "What makes a playgroup different from these (other kinds of provision) is not what the children do but how the playgroup is run ..... Ideally, playgroups are run by the parents of the children attending it. They form a committee. rent premises, raise funds, buy equipment, appoint the playleaders - often from among themselves - and take it in turn to help during play sessions."

And in an italicized paragraph at the end of the leaflet, this is put in context.

> "The years between birth and five are now well-known to be the critical ones in the development of a human child. By offering parents the chance to take responsibility for these vital years with increasing knowledge and confidence, playgroups contribute to the well-being of the whole community, present and future."

It can be seen that the belief system of SPPA is not merely a statement of a desirable end, but also a atatement of a method, a way of achieving these ends. And it is this which is fundamental to the ability of SPPA to bridge the gap between a communal association and a purposive organization: since the ideology is not just a statement of aims but also of method, this ensures the possibility of maintaining the communal nature of the group. As Dorothy Gaskin put it as long ago as May 1976, in the SPPA newsletter:

> "SPPA exists to advance the education of pre-school children by ensuring that the parents are involved in and responsible for their children. This is done by having committees of parents to run the group, by the mothers helping at the playgroup session, etc. It's quite easy really. For example, you join a tennis club to play tennis, not to let other people do it for you, or to play yourself but stop other people enjoying a game. It's just the same, joining SPPA."

And on a local level, the message is carried on the back cover of each issue of Lothian Playgroup News:

> "The Scottish Pre-School Playgroups Association exists to help parents understand and provide for the needs of their young children. It aims to promote community situations in which parents can, with growing enjoyment and confidence, make the best use of their own knowledge and resources in the development of their children and themselves."

(And then it goes on to list nine different ways of doing this.)

Over and over again we find that the ideology of SPPA is concerned not merely with an exposition of the theory behind its aims and goals, but also with the theory behind its practice and its methods of organization also. And it is this characteristic, which it shares with other mutual-aid groups, that is the basis of its transcendence of the communal/associative gap: to be able to organize in a purposive and rational way and, at the same time, maintain communal feeling and group identity, it is necessary to have an ideology which says something about the

method of organization, the commitment to co-operative action. SPPA are quite aware that it is this which sets them apart from other groups working with under-fives.

To summarize the essential elements of the ideology of SPPA, it is not and does not see itself as simply an organization providing play facilities for pre-school children, but one which believes that the parents of those children should help to control, run and provide those services: and SPPA sees itself as an association comprised of parents who are doing just that. This brings us to a second phase of our analysis: the way that this ideology manifests itself in the structure of SPPA. The development of the structure from the ideology is set out quite clearly in numerous places, but I quote from a newsletter published by SPPA in August of 1976: the article is recommended by the editors as being "as good a statement about the association and its purposes as any we have read". I want to quote this at some length:

> 'What is SPPA?' An association of playgroups. This means that the playgroups make their own decisions. They are not told what is good for them by 'them up there'. 'Why does it exist?' To do anything that its members want it to do. Because all committees should be representative of the playgroups, the playgroups should feel that the SPPA committees are there to do what they want them to do, not to tell the playgroups what to do. 'What can I get out of SPPA?' Only as much as you put in. Meetings do not just happen. Someone has to arrange them ..... there is no highly-paid 'them up there' to do it. It is all done by voluntary people. Let me explain the structure of SPPA. Representatives from each playgroup come together and form a SPPA

Branch. The branch organizes open meetings ..... speakers ..... services like bulk-buying ..... helpers ..... talks to schools ..... forms a united body if one playgroup is having problems. This sounds like a big time-consuming job ..... but if every playgroup pulls its weight .. the job is made smaller. ... Each branch sends a representative to the District Committee. What is its function? To provide services ..... work with other organizations. But where do the people come from? They come from YOU. Your immediate reaction is that you could never represent SPPA on a committee because you don't know enough about it - but you ARE it ..... It's no good relying on other people to speak up for you - they don't exist. ..... The district committee sends representatives to the Regional committee. Why does this exist? To work with the people in local authority departments who decide how much grant shall be given ..... where new nurseries are to be placed. Why should we sit back and let them decide? .. but with several hundred playgroups in a region you have to give a few people the power to do it for you - but you have to tell them what you want them to say, through your branches and districts ..... they can't do it without your help. The Scottish Executive Committee or SEC ... is ... a bunch of ordinary playgroup people who have served for a bit on some of their local SPPA committees and are willing to travel .... to meet with others from all over Scotland to decide a national policy. When people ask

'What can SPPA do for me?' the answer is
'Nothing, unless you are prepared to help ...
find the time and ... people."

IDEOLOGY IN PRACTICE

This relatively brief, and only incidentally incomplete statement of how SPPA is organized also includes a statement of the ideology of parental control and reasoned arguments for the necessity of pyramidal structure of five levels. Stress is laid on the two-way nature of involvement and participation, and there is recognition of the fact that the ideology of participatory involvement works both ways - that though it is a good thing, it has to be continually worked at or the whole pyramid collapses. In short, the organization is completely imbued with the basic ideology outlined earlier - no level makes decisions for any other level where it could make them itself, and all are ultimately responsible to individual playgroups and the parents thereof. The hierarchy is one of responsibility, with a broad base, rather than one of authority with a narrow apex: and unless the basic ideology of parents providing their own children with playgroups is grasped, one will never be able to see how it works, or come to grips with what the association is really about.

Similarly, when one looks at the content of SPPA's activities - what it actually does - there are some facets of activity which, though central to what SPPA does, can easily be dismissed as irrelevancies unless their link with ideology and structure are recognized. Whilst SPPA itself recognizes that it is primarily distinguished from other kinds of pre-school provision by the way it provides them, the facets we refer to are activities unique to SPPA. There are two such areas which SPPA covers and for which nursery schools, for instance, do not attempt to provide anything, and both are a direct result of the ideology of

SPPA and directly functional for its structural integrity. One of these is training, and the other is acting as a grass roots based pressure group.

As regards training, SPPA recognizes that commitment to equality in decision-making and participation by all parents in the running of a playgroup is mere rhetoric unless considerable effort is put into ensuring that skills are available to all the members: thousands of mothers each year go on training courses, and SPPA is thus a major provider of parental training, of adult education, in its own right. A more commonly given reason for providing training, and an equally compelling one, is that SPPA sees itself as providing playgroups as much for parental education as that of pre-school children: in this respect, helping on the rota in a playgroup and attending meetings is seen as an integral, though informal, part of training to be a more knowledgable parent also. The nursery school which provides parental training of any sort is still a very rare one: but in playgroups, training is a direct consequence of the ideology of parental involvement.

So too is the work of SPPA as a pressure group. If everyone believes that parents ought to be involved in matters affecting their children, and if in SPPA they actually are involved, then there is an automatically conferred legitimacy on the activities and efforts of SPPA to speak for playgroups, and for parents generally. A glance at the resolutions of the Annual General Meetings shows this. In 1977, for example, resolutions included ones about full use of empty school buildings, about urging the government to alter its emphasis and to encourage parental initiatives, as well one on playgroups in Northern Ireland. The content of SPPA activities is thus far broader than simple child care, and unless one understands the basis of the legitimation of these broader activities, it is only too easy to dismiss them, as some do, as simply mouthings of middle-class busybodies.

We turn now to the tensions which result from not appreciating the nature of SPPA - that it is both communal and associative, and that its ideology, structure and activities are all intertwined. There are two different areas in which problems arise: first, inside SPPA itself, and secondly, in relations between SPPA and external bodies. The first set result from members of the organization not perceiving its nature correctly, and the second result from outsiders who can affect SPPA not appreciating the sort of organization it is. We shall look at the internal tensions first.

INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Possibly the central internal problem of SPPA is that it is a permanent group with a temporary membership (we discussed this earlier). Since the activities are dependent on ideology, that ideology must be maintained at all costs, or else the organization will fall apart, and all that will be left is a service provided for mothers instead of by them. There is a policy in SPPA of change: temporary membership may lead to problems, but it is seen also as a source of vitality - so no member should remain in the same role longer than a year or two. Consequently, there must be a continual inflow of people to fulfill tasks at all levels - this concern was of course much in evidence in the quotation earlier on.

However, it is true to say that many of the mothers who 'send' their children to a playgroup are unaware, in the first instance, not only of playgroup ideology but also of the differences between playgroups, nursery schools, nursery classes in schools, childminders and so on: their concern is primarily to get their children in somewhere. So the perception of SPPA is based on an implicit theory drawn from experiences of organizations through a lifetime - that 'someone up there' runs them, that there are staff or employees of some sort, that the individual is essentially a consumer, not a provider or a

participant. The theory our ideal-typical parent has is obviously inadequate for the organization as it actually is, and this misapprehension could be fatal for its own idea of what it wants to be. Obviously, for SPPA to function effectively, only a small proportion of parents need to fully participate and involve themselves beyond the basic level of helping on the rota: but nevertheless, to obtain both this small level of involvement and the potential of further participation later on requires that a lot of time be spent on a sort of resocialization and reeducation. New playgroup mums may be the salt of the earth, but they rarely become enthusiasts overnight. And furthermore, a child is rarely in a playgroup longer than twenty months, and many three year olds are admitted to nursery classes at four, so there is sometimes only six months or so for this socialization to work. Of course, many parents might send more than one child to playgroup: but again, this might also only happen if they have 'caught the playgroup bug'.

So the central mechanism on which SPPA at all levels ultimately depends is the effectiveness of the education in playgroup values which parents receive in the time their child is there. This education - which is basically learning a new organizational form - is done through three main channels. First is basic training, which may be no more than learning on the job, or may be a more formal session for new mums: in both cases the agents, the educators, are the playleader and the other mums. The second channel is via playgroup visiting, which consists of experienced playgroup people from the branch or district, or the SEC-appointed regional advisor, coming to visit the group and giving direct external stimulation to the process. The third channel is the communication network of playgroup literature: the PPA magazine 'Contact', the SPPA newsletter, the regional and district newsletters, and the Branch newsletters. All these are meant to inform the 'just-mums' (as playgroup mothers tend to be called) of the fact that they are part of a wide-ranging movement embracing thousands of others,and of the need and opportunity for

them to help further up the ladder. At the least, all these channels ensure that the majority of parents play their part in their own group, and for the proportion who are needed to carry on filling vacant tasks at other levels, more formal training courses and the mere fact of involvement help to cement the commitment into place.

Even so, some playgroups, especially isolated rural ones, go through cycles. It is obvious that if the mechanisms are working properly, they are likely to work for more than just one person. Conversely, when they aren't working properly, it is likely that they won't work for anyone. So one year there might be many people around who keep the playgroup running, and the next year the bare minimum. These fluctuations would tend to even out at the district or branch level (provided that the district or branch was working properly) since the law of averages would take effect (if there is such a thing - perhaps the balance of probability is a better, more scientific, term) when a dozen or more playgroups are aggregated together. The odds are that they won't all be in a 'down' phase at the same time. Unless, of course, the local branch wasn't working well.

The branch is possibly the most crucial of the multiple levels of the playgroup movement to its character as a mutual-aid group. Whilst district and regional committees acquire new members by natural progression if the level below them on the pyramid is working, the branch has to actively recruit. This is because even if a playgroup is working well, it might be unaware of the wider needs of the movement. Unless there is a branch, there is no point of contact with the structure of SPPA as a living and growing entity: indeed, without a proper branch level, this probably would be the case, as districts find too many playgroups or find them scattered over too wide an area to visit them all. Without a strong branch, the responsibility for continuing socialization and communication rests entirely on the shoulders of the supervisor, who is not herself a mother of one

of the playgroup children, but an employee of the playgroup: and education in the basics of mutual aid only works well if the agent is identifiable as the same sort of person as the mothers. Many supervisors are in fact not unhappy to run the group entirely by themselves. Participation and involvement has to be made to work, and doesn't just happen. In this, the branch is probably in the most crucial position in the organization.

So the central problem internal to the workings of SPPA as a communal and associative mutual-aid group is to maintain the processes of socialization, and keep open channels of communication: and when the basic unit of a single playgroup fails in this, the SPPA branch is the most important part of the organization. It is the branch which has to have the grasp of the ideas and theory behind the movement to be able to pass them on to newcomers whose own experience of an organization has resulted in a different paradigm. This brings us to the second area where tensions and problems occur - those relating to other groups in the same area, usually groups which conform to a more rationalist model. Very often, such groups are solely concerned with the needs of children in the narrow sense, not with the needs of the parents, and certainly not with the needs of the organization which is supplying the means to fulfil those needs.

While we have explained the need of SPPA to have branches as a necessary and essential part of maintaining its structure, that need isn't obvious to anyone who is looking at SPPA from a rationalist point of view and is only concerned with the end product as they see it - provision of pre-school education. While the SEC is needed to liase on a national Scottish level, and while regional and district SPPA committees are clearly useful tools in talking with the relevant local authorities, and while the playgroups themselves actually 'do the work', the need for a branch isn't obvious to the statutory powers: indeed, unless one values parental involvement as an end in itself and appreciates the needs of SPPA as an organization, the branch may appear as an irrelevancy.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND SPPA STRUCTURE

The first few years of Regionalization in Scotland (from 1974 to 1979) provide us with a fascinating instance of how involvement of a mutual-aid group with a local authority which isn't at all interested in how it works, but only what it provides, can affect the functioning of the group. Briefly, the contrast is between Lothian Region and the rest of Scotland. Outside Lothian, either the Playgroup movement was ignored, or helped in a modest way: inside Lothian, the policy was to help playgroups heavily, but to ignore SPPA almost entirely. Probably this was done for the best of reasons. The clearest instance comes in the level of grant to playgroups. In 1977-78, the average grant from the local authority in Scotland as a whole was £88: but in Lothian Region it was £533. In the rest of Scotland excluding Lothian region the average was £30: this one region accounted for 70% of direct grants to Scottish playgroups. The same situation held in 1979-80, when Lothian gave an average grant of £805, and about 67% of the Scottish total. Most of the extra money received by Lothian playgroups went to reduce fees: the average fee was 12p per session in Lothian, compared with 25p over the whole country. In 1979-80, the average fee in Lothian was 19p as against over 30p for the rest of the country. The region imposed a 10p maximum fee in a grant-aided group. The rest of the extra money went in wages: the Scottish average wage for a playgroup supervisor was £541, but the Lothian average was over £200 more than this. Lothian, despite its help to individual playgroups, gave no grant to any SPPA organization at all with the exception of a grant to the training committee in Lothian (of which I was the treasurer) with the strict condition it was to be used directly for playgroup training and nothing else.

The effects of this on individual playgroups was small but noticeable. Predictably enough, playleaders in Lothian tended to stay longer in their playgroups (about six months in both 1977-78 and 79-80). This was no doubt due to being paid more, but the wage is pretty meagre anyway. Perhaps more significantly, only 14% of Lothian playgroups reported all parents as helping regularly, compared with an average in the whole of Scotland of almost 40%. In 1979-80, the Scottish average was again almost 40%, but the percentage in Lothian was again significantly lower at 18%. In the same year, 20% of Lothian groups reported only a few parents regularly helping, whereas the Scottish average was less than 5%: again, 13% of Lothian groups said about half the parents never helped at all, compared with another 5% for Scotland as a whole. Yet the structure of playgroups was remarkably uniform: roughly the same percentage (over 90%) of Lothian groups had a regular rota, and the same proportion as the rest of the country, about two-thirds, were run by a committee consisting entirely of current parents. It was difficult to get any really reliable indices of the numbers of members who were absorbing the ideology in Lothian as compared to elsewhere, but the few there were showed the region as being less successful in this respect as the rest of the country.

Perhaps more to the point were the subjective impressions of the members of the various SPPA committees in Lothian. They were all worried by the lack of branch strength and the scarcity of bodies to help with regional and district committees. The fact that they couldn't find a treasurer for the Training committee when I first arrived tells its own story, and a volunteer to replace me four years later when it looked as though my student days were numbered was equally hard to find. During that time, only one new SPPA member had joined that particular committee, and this was not for want of trying to find members. The universally recognized cause of this was the lack of branch development. It seemed to me at the time, and still does, that behind this lay the fact that most of the playgroups in Lothian

were getting fairly large grants from the region, and were fairly independent. The regional committee and the district ones received nothing at all, and the infrastructure of SPPA in the Lothians was thus turned upside down. That this was a deliberate policy of the local authority there is no doubt: when the SPPA region pressed for SPPA advisors, the council didn't help but instead went ahead with a plan to appoint their own staff as advisors instead, thus undercutting the role of SPPA still further. The needs of the regional organization for branches and SPPA visiting were written about by SPPA at some length, but resources were never made available by the council, and the possibility of raising the resources by harnessing the efforts of playgroups was limited by the fact that they tended to look to the regional council rather than to their own SPPA organization. Branches were developing slowly, largely due to the establishment of a Branch Development Officer in Edinburgh, a post funded part-time by a charitable trust, and in the other districts due to the hangover of the more enlightened policies of the old county authorities which existed prior to regionalization, especially as regarded training.

But the regional council has the sole aim of providing services, and does not itself adhere to an ideology of involvement, but to a Seebohm style of professionalism: so it doesn't accept that the need for branches is a valid one from its point of view. SPPA is largely dependent on the local authority for finance: whilst this hasn't always been the case, and a lot of fundraising is done still at a local playgroup level, the local contacts and energy available to a playgroup are not as easy for a wider, remoter and more nebulous network to trap. In any case, SPPA regions tend to say that they are ratepayers and taxpayers as well and all they are asking for is the right to have control over part of the total pre-school budget: playgroups do cost less than most other types of pre-school provision as far as a local authority is concerned.

So it is obvious that whilst the service-providing aspects of SPPA are supported by the local authority, the communal, non goal-directed (as far as the council is concerned) aspects are not. To some extent, the same dichotomy appears over and over again. For example, Lothian Region Social Work and Education departments take a narrow view of training, regarding the informal ways which we have seen to be crucial to the socialization of SPPA members as being a second rate type of training, and they prefer to fund formal courses and training days, which, though valuable, are preaching to the converted. When the Training subcommittee of Lothian region did manage to set aside £100 for supporting mothers' meetings in playgroups, they found that the lack of an adequate branch network made it impossible for playgroups to take it up - they simply didn't appreciate what it was about. When, the following year, they attempted again to get money to help pay the expenses of playgroup visitors, the fact that they hadn't spent the £100 for mothers' meetings was thought to show that they didn't need more resources, and it took rather a long time to convey the true position. Even then, the need for playgroup visitors was not accepted.

Once more, the dichotomy appears at the Scottish level in relation to constitutions. While a constitution and a statement of aims are a necessary part of an associative organization, a communal group needs only to agree on a set of mutual definitions and values, with perhaps a few rules to govern formal interaction and formal decision making. Originally, the SPPA constitution stated that SPPA existed to "advance the development of pre-school children": but the Income Tax Inspectorate (which in Scotland fulfils the role of the Charity Commission in England and Wales) insisted that it be changed to "advance the education of pre-school children". Again, in the same constitution, the aim of "encouraging parental involvement" had the words "through related charitable activity" tacked on the front of them. Both changes are apparently minor and somewhat petty, but indicate

that SPPA exists in an organizational environment where goals and aims are seen to be more important than values and beliefs. The Income Tax Inspectorate are perfectly willing to regard the services provided as being essentially charitable aims, but have an apparent blind spot when asked to accept the values and ideas which lie behind them as being equally altruistic: they are in fact seen as too 'political' and therefore non-charitable.

STATE INSTITUTIONS AND MUTUAL AID

The essential point which we are trying to get over here is one which we made in the last chapter too. The external bodies with which SPPA finds it has to deal are rationalistic, goal oriented organizations: and not only are they oriented solely towards the specific needs of children, but also see SPPA only in this context, and require specific statements of purpose from them. This then becomes the only aspect of SPPA which they recognize, know and support. The communal aspects, the ideology of parental control and involvement are just as important a part of SPPA, and are undoubtedly crucial to its status as a mutual-aid group and voluntary organization. But they are just not accorded the same importance by outsiders, and are often seen as an intrusion on the supposedly value-free processes of policy formation and administration. The fact that if SPPA ceases to get parents involved it will also cease to exist doesn't seem to occur to them: there is a self-imposed blindness to anything which isn't directly involved with children. So whenever SPPA comes into contact with such bodies as COSLA (The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities), local authorities themselves, central government or the Tax Inspectorate, it has to play down the ideology of the organization and concentrate on the services.

If these attitudes, which they are forced to adopt in order to survive, become internalized amongst the members of the SPPA committees, then they will no longer attempt to put their ideology into practice, and will regard the administration of

pre-school play the important reason for their existence: and ultimately SPPA would become 'incorporated', to become simply another voluntary service-providing agency and no longer a mutual-aid group. That this does not happen is probably due entirely to the fact that the structure and temporary nature of subcommittee membership means that SPPA committees always have one eye on their grass roots, and see providing services to them as being the way of providing play for under-fives. But there is no doubt that other voluntary organizations which were originally mutual-aid groups also were forced to see themselves as the authorities saw them, and lost much of their usefulness to their members in their attempt to provide tangible social benefits in terms that outsiders would recognize. This route to incorporation is entirely due to inappropriate models of organization being applied to a group.

What we have tried to do in this chapter is to give a brief but comprehensive overview of SPPA, and the way it fits into the theory we developed in the first part of the thesis. More than that, we have begun to use that theory to show up various aspects of government policy, and how, inadvertently, destructive and undesirable consequences can arise through the inadequacy of the theory of organization when applied to mutual-aid groups. This has involved regarding the belief system of SPPA, along with its structure, as being fundamental, and showing how problems and tensions which result could be explained in those terms. The independence of policies (which are supposed to be arrived at objectively) and of ideology (which is seen as political, in the perjorative sense) is the dogma which both gives rise to external problems and makes their resolution difficult, particularly from the administrative point of view. The growing tendency to encourage the growth of voluntary organizations has not, in the case of mutual-aid groups, always been matched by an acceptance of the fact that they are communally-based because of their ideology and because of the common interests of their members. And whilst the reasons for people in government shying away from

suspicion of bias are understandable, they are nevertheless sometimes responsible for the disintegration of community values in some of the groups which they claim to foster.

Consequently, to enable a mutual-aid group to carry out government policy must involve an acceptance of the ideology and an encouragement of the interests of the members as being a legitimate part of the basis of the group itself. Failure to realise this may and sometimes does lead to a loss of the qualities which made the group so attractive in the first place. At the very least, provision of support on government terms rather than on the terms of those who are meant to be supported arouses discontent rather than gratitude.

> "For instance, Dial-a-ride is a cheap form of transport for the disabled in Islington. But it is not possible to dial-a-ride to 10 Downing Street to join a demo. No council vehicles may be used for political rallies ..... Our independence is restricted and we are denied the possibility of affecting social and political change..... Disabled people must organize their own lives, take their own risks and make their own mistakes"
> (Gurmeet Kasba, in a comment on the Year of the Disabled in City Limits 10.)

To put it somewhat more starkly, an outside organization seeking to work with a mutual-aid group must recognize that it is quite possible for the two parties to want to achieve something for what are essentially different reasons, and that in the case of government and such a group, those reasons are as valid for a mutual-aid group as the meeting of social needs (or whatever) is for government. Whether any government or government agency can work on a 'primus inter pares' basis (as first among equals) is an open question, and does of course bring the political

theorists among us back to a consideration of what the rights of such a relationship consist of on both sides. While a pure anarchist answer is to say that such a relationship is one-sided and doomed, this may be unduly pessimistic. I would hope it is possible. Certainly, the ability of SPPA to work with government is not completely assured, and has in the past depended on the fact that it is such a broadly based group to survive the pressures involved. Even in the case of Lothian Region which we have discussed, the fact that the organization extends beyond the Lothians and can draw on support and experience on a national basis helps - as does the peer-group pressure which goes along with that.

We have now reached our basic conclusions on the effects of grants, and the functioning of mutual aid groups in the welfare state. It is an important subject and the Social Science Research Council did after all pay me for three years and are entitled to value for money. I think that they have received it. It is also nice for social administrators to be able to see answers to 'what should we do about ... ' type of questions, and for better or for worse the theories expounded earlier may well have a certain predictive value, provided they are applied correctly. But for our last chapter we shall present the results of survey work carried out from 1978-80 on playgroups in Scotland which serve to give empirical weight to the arguments we have put forward here.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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THE S.P.P.A. QUESTIONNAIRE

This chapter is mostly concerned with the survey of playgroups in Scotland which I carried out together with the Research Committee of the SEC during the spring of 1978, and again in 1980. As was mentioned earlier, I was acting as treasurer of the Lothian Region Training subcommitee of SPPA, and in 1977 I was asked by Nita Brown, who was the Senior SPPA regional advisor, if I would be prepared to help with the biennial playgroup questionnaire. The main reason for this (apart from the fact that I am a nice person) was that I could use the computing facilities at the University. (For those who have been paying attention, it will be remembered that Bakunin sent Fanelli to Spain because he was the only comrade with a free train pass). With the co-operation of the late Professor John Spencer, who was supervising me at the time, I undertook to do this.

There were two main benefits to this from the point of view of the research. Firstly, I had the opportunity of working with the playgroup organization outside Lothian itself. Not only did this enable me to see how the SEC functioned, but I was also able to talk with people from other regions and broaden my view of SPPA to include more of a national perspective. This could not fail to be a good thing: in fact, most of the interpretations presented in all the parts of this thesis which deal with SPPA were gained from both my work with the Lothian Regional Committee, as treasurer of the training committee, and with the SEC, as a sort of social researcher-cum-computer operator. I do

not think any of this would have been possible had I not had the chance to actually do something useful in both cases. That the questionnaire gave me this opportunity was justification enough for carrying out the work.

Secondly, of course, the data itself was of value. It will be apparent later on in this chapter that the amount of data gathered was quite large, and could be analysed in a large variety of ways. To some extent, I bit off much more than I could chew, since I am now of the opinion that to do the results of the questionnaire full justice would have taken an entire thesis in itself. It is apparent that the main part of this thesis has not been empirical in the sense that we have at no time sought to uncover new facts and hitherto undisclosed mysteries about the inner workings of the social fabric. The real world has served an illustrative purpose rather than being an end in itself, and we have been manipulating concepts rather than figures. We shall carry on with this approach here.

This shouldn't be taken to imply that the data collected about playgroups isn't worth more attention. Simply, the main constraint has always been time, and I had to decide whether to concentrate on presenting an interpretive framework which is loosely filled in at the important places, or whether to concentrate on number-crunching the figures to derive meaningful relationships between possibly unknown phenomena without a sound theoretical base on which to put them. For better or worse, the latter option was put aside. It seems that either we can have sound statistics without proper theory, or a better theory but with holes in the statistics. It is obviously possible to have both in an ideal world: but the constraints of time and resources make this impossible.

To the extent that the theory of mutual-aid groups we have developed is an acceptable one, the argument would be much tighter were I never to mention the fact that I had gathered some data at all. One cannot help being conscious, when looking at the statistics as presented here, that some interesting relationships

go unexplored. My mitigating plea is that if there are pointers for someone else to go to work on, then they should do so: and that it ought not to be held against postgraduate research that the time and resources available to it do not allow for the completeness attainable with better funded research. The deficiencies, then, are not of methodology or of theory, but arise simply from the fact that the subject was too big to be comprehensively dealt with in the institutional context.

PRESENTATION OF FACTS AND FIGURES

Apologia aside, what have we left? The data presented gives an overall picture of playgroups in Scotland which is comprehensive and fairly complete. It is the existence of SPPA, its scope and its nature which is of most relevance here. We shall see that some of the data does exhibit significant relationships, which we shall interpret accordingly, and that other phenomena appear merely as curiosities. Above all, we shall treat the data as factual in itself, which may be explainable in terms of our theories, but was not designed either in its collection or in its analysis to be a test of them. The questionnaire was financed and designed entirely by the SPPA research committee, with help from the public relations subcommittee of the SEC, and I wore my SPPA hat rather than my student one. Whether or not a questionnaire could have been designed to fully explore all the ramifications of our theory is debatable in any case: but since this one was designed by a committee which had merely a contingent interest in the sociology of mutual-aid groups in the welfare state, this is academic (in the sense that it is speculative). The questionnaire itself is reproduced in Appendix 1 to this chapter.Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4, which appear here, were originally produced in one large table for mass distribution within SPPA, and the facts and figures reflect the preoccupations of the organization as to what were the most important facts to them. Consequently, it gives an

excellent guide to SPPA nationally, since the facts reflect the concerns of the members.

The tables give breakdowns of playgroup income and expenditure, size, staff, and some indicators of parental involvement according to area type, region, and a couple of other factors. The criteria for selecting which figures to report were broadly the same as were used to decide which questions to ask in the first place, but were complicated by many factors. Particular problems were caused by the imbalance of responses in certain key areas (key from our point of view), which made the extraction of basic relationships quite difficult. The fact is that the majority of groups are remarkably similar . It is clearly difficult, when over 95% of playgroups report that they are managed by parent committees, to come up with significant differences between playgroups which are run by committees and those which aren't. As a result, I had to give results for playgroups managed solely by current parents and those which were managed in all other ways, including mixtures of past and current parents. This is because there was no other way of presenting figures which would make sense when compared with Scotland as a whole.

I really don't have much of an idea of how to interpret this figure. There are many reasons for including at least some parents of children who have left the playgroup on the committee, if they are willing, and far from detracting from the nature of a mutual-aid group, such participation could well improve it. In fact, one might suppose that a playgroup unable to retain at least one of its old committee would be less effective at transmitting ideas and training new members than one which can retain them. On the other hand, the possibility of the playgroup being run by a clique of a few people who never retire from office would certainly be no good thing. So there can be no clear statement of what the figures mean.

For example, we can see from Table 4 that 60% of groups said they were managed solely by current parents, with 40% being managed in all other ways. This 60-40 split obviously is better statistically than the 95-5 split between any type of parental committee and other forms of management. However, when we observe that compared with a Scottish average of 39%, 43% of the ones which had only current parents on the committee but only 26% of the other types of committee reported all parents helped regularly, I confess to not knowing what this may mean. (If an interested party comes forth who doesn't mind fishing in the data, and if ERCC can be persuaded not to wipe the files, and if SPPA find someone to not only do the 1982 questionnaire, but also integrate the results with the 1978 and 1980 questionnaires for a bit of time-series analysis, some light may be shed on these figures.)

CATEGORIES IN THE TABLES

Perhaps the most useful thing at this stage would be to simply elucidate in more detail the categories in the tables, so that the picture presented of SPPA will be that much clearer. The horizontal ones are the same for all of the tables 1-4. Reference to the text of the questionnaire will help with most of them: the Regional categories are self explanatory, and so are the urban/rural ones. Within the urban playgroups, however, I renamed the answers to question 7. I called the 'executive and professional' groups 'middle-class' and the 'skilled/manual' group 'working-class'. Most playgroups laid claim to some sort of mixed status - out of the 44% urban groups, it can be seen that only a third (15% of the total) admitted to one of the clearer categories. This whole area was one of the most controversial of the questionnaire, as not a few groups felt it to be none of our business. At the same time, SPPA is and has historically been put in the position where class is important. The accusation of being entirely middle class has been made by many people (including the

Wolfenden Report on voluntary organizations), usually as an attack on the playgroup movement. Unsurprisingly, the most persistent criticism of this type has come from unions, who see voluntary groups taking jobs away from their members. However, the popular image of playgroups as middle-class is one which SPPA are always fighting.

We can see that assuming the reclassification is acceptable, working-class groups are on average poorer, pay less wages, have lower fees, higher grants, fundraise less, are slightly smaller, and are more likely not to receive help from every parent. This last is probably because of a higher proportion of working mums, and we can see that where parents do help they help more often in working class groups. None of the differences are dramatic, though: as a matter of fact, only the ones concerning finance were at all significant on an analysis of variance. This is hardly surprising. From the point of view of our thesis here, the only important point is how similar the two groups are. The fact that working class groups and middle class groups, despite the difference in resources, are broadly similar in most other respects would seem to indicate that ability to organize a mutual-aid group isn't a prerogative of either the middle classes (who are usually credited with the facility for organization) or the working classs (who, according to same mythology, have held on longer to a sense of community).

The same conclusions apply to the urban/rural divide: despite marked differences, we can see that rural groups are broadly similar. It is interesting that a rural group, though it tends to be poorer, spends more per child than urban groups and less on wages. Isolated playgroups, unsurprisingly, were at one extreme, having only one-third the income of middle-class urban groups: but once this is taken into account, the picture is not very different.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

The regional differences were the ones which excited the most interest within SPPA. We have briefly discussed Lothians, and a glance at tables 1-4 will show that the single biggest feature in the regional breakdowns is due to the Lothian grant policy. It is also noteworthy that in Highland Region, over 80% of groups received no grant at all, while in the Dumbarton division of Strathclyde, every group received one. The mere fact of receiving a grant would seem to be of less impact than the amount of grant and the way it is given. Dumbarton, incidentally, is where the first Scottish groups began, and has highly effective branches. In Strathclyde generally, the Regional grants to playgroups are distributed through the playgroup movement rather than directly: this appears to strengthen the networks in Strathclyde.

The other region which is interesting is Fife. Nearly all groups receive grants, though only one-tenth of the amount in Lothian. Fife groups would seem to be the best-off in Scotland: they also raise the most funds and have the highest session fee. Most groups in Fife were rural ones (which isn't on the table anywhere). All the branches, however, received grants from the region.There was a separate branch questionnaire in 1978, which was somewhat inconclusive owing to lack of response: however, the average branch covered 14 playgroups and had two fieldworkers, for whose expenses an average grant of around £250 was given. As we have seen, no branches in Lothian received grants. All four branches in Fife were funded.

PARENTAL HELP

The two categories in parental help related to question 24. About 87% of all playgroups reported either all or most parents helping, and a further 8% said about half helped regularly. In order to avoid the figures becoming statistically

insignificant, I was forced to take the 38% of playgroups where all parents helped and compare it with all others. So when we see that the average grant for these groups was less than half of the average for groups where not all the parents helped, we mustn't forget that 75% of the latter group had most parents helping. The differences, though significant, aren't that easy to interpret: it would seem that if not all the parents help, a group fundraises more. I cannot think why this should be so. To manufacture an explanation is not difficult. Possibly parents who cannot help regularly (remember we cannot distinguish between parents who can't help and those who just don't) feel so guilty that they go out and fundraise instead. However plausible such an explanation may be, it adds nothing to our picture or to the argument.

Incidentally, more sophisticated statistical techniques were used, but were inconclusive. Neither multiple regressions nor factor analysis gave any unequivocal results when trying to disentangle the effects of different variables, and a composite 'mutual-aid' or involvement factor did not readily materialize. When I chose to present the results as a picture of SPPA, rather than as statistical evidence for a theory, it wasn't because I hadn't tried to extract meaningful constructs, but because they didn't seem to be there. I spent rather a long time trying to find a strong definite relationship which showed something unequivocally, but failed. Essentially this was for the very good statistical reason that all the groups were too similar, and the questions were not sensitive enough. When around 90% of the respondents have rotas, parental management and high involvement, it is naturally more difficult to find causal relationships than when the split is 50-50. Paradoxically enough, the success of SPPA as a mutual aid network made it impossible to isolate the reasons for it with a simple survey.

We have already discussed the division of current parent management versus other forms: it is the most striking example of the homogeneity of SPPA leading to artificial distinctions being

drawn. Purely as a matter of interest, over 94% of all playgroups in the survey had parental committees of some sort, and over 85% were managed solely by parents (they answered a or b on question 22).

TRAINING AND GRANTS

The figures reported on training courses were from question 38: it was hoped that since training plays such a large part in SPPA thought, the more trained groups might show some differences. However, it can be seen that the number of parents going on training courses, given our limited dichotomy of more than one or not, is related to size of playgroup and little else. The playgroups reporting more trained parents were simply bigger, so there were more parents to go. This doesn't include informal training in a playgroup, though. It cannot be said with any certainty whether going outside the group for training is related to inadequacy of resources inside the group (including branch visitors) or related to keenness on the part of the participants. So to take the simple set of figures presented here as showing something is premature. The questions were not sufficiently penetrating to answer our subsequent need.

The final category of analysis on the vertical axis common to tables 1-4 was whether or not the group received a grant. An examination of these figures (from question 14 of the survey) shows that there is indeed some differences between playgroups which do and do not receive grants. The income and expenditure was roughly the same in both groups, but a higher proportion of expenses were on children and a lower proportion on wages in the groups which receive some grant. Additionally, groups which were grant-aided had a lower proportion of untrained staff. The latter point is probably due to the inevitable responsibility the grant-giving body would have to raising standards in the groups it was helping and is almost certainly a wholly beneficial effect.

When we compare the groups which do receive a grant in Scotland as a whole with the groups in Lothian, which we looked at earlier, the picture is more complex. The average spent per child on wages in 1977 was approximately £20 in the playgroups with no grant, falls to £14 in the groups with some grant, but in Lothian, where the grants are comparatively enormous, the figure was £28 per child per year. The average spent on children in Lothian was only slightly higher at £8.24p compared with £7.05 in all grant aided groups. Now my own experience was entirely of the Lothian situation, which is clearly one of the most anomalous in the country as a whole, so I cannot offer a proper explanation of the figures overall. However we can conclude that the effect of grant aid on a playgroup is not a uniform thing. I would say that the other policies of Lothian, which we discussed earlier, are more directly linked to differences in Lothian groups than the level of grant. To repeat the point: we cannot distinguish between the effect of a grant as such, and the contingent effect of the other policies of a grant-giving body, and there are good theoretical reasons for supposing the latter to be important and the mere fact of grant largely irrelevant.

Incidentally, it may be noticed that we asked in question 14 where the grant came from. I became suspicious of the answers when I noticed that playgroups in the same region, with identical grants, attributed the source to different bodies. Enquiries showed that a grant reported as coming from, say, the local SPPA district was in fact merely distributed by them for the Social Work department: and that the knowledge of most playgroup people about Scottish local government was not sufficient for them to accurately report the source of a grant they may have received. So I had to leave that analysis out. This was a shame, for I had reason to think that grants from community education departments carried less strings than grants from social work departments. This is obviously because a community education department is more likely to be interested in the organization while a social work department would be more interested in the need being met. I

would have liked to be able to show this: it is likely that even if the source of grant were reliably obtained, the bluntness of any indicators of 'strings' would have been as much of a barrier. It should also be realized that the differences, if any, would probably show more strongly at branch level.

The above categories are all used as categories to analyse playgroup expenditure in table one, and income in table two. The figures for both income and expenditure are not, strictly speaking, to be taken as accurate. They are intended as a guide to the proportions spent or received on various items, and as a guide to the differences between the vertical categories used in the breakdowns. There is no reason to suppose that they are inaccurate in this respect, as the errors in the collection apply equally across the board.

The errors are accounting ones rather than sociological ones. For example, the estimated average income per playgroup minus the estimated average expenditure should give us the estimated annual profit. According to our figures, this is over £150 profit per playgroup. Do not be misled: we asked for some figures for the current year, and some for the previous one. On the income side, we asked for the current session fee in question 11, and calculated the total income from fees using this figure and the figures from question 10 for attendance each week. The grant figure was also the current year's grant. However, the total amount fundraised from question 19 was for the previous year, since no group could know how much it was going to raise in the current year. Similarly, all the playgroup expenditure figures had to be taken for the last year, as estimates would be impossible to use or make: the rent was an exception however, since a group would know how much it was going to spend on rent. Overall, most of the expenditure figures are for one year earlier than income figures, so given that inflation takes its toll, we would expect more income than expenditure, and hence a profit. Interestingly, were we to take the percentage profit as an indicator of the inflation rate from 1977 to 1978 it comes out at

around 15%, which is not far off par for the government index. However, not only is the profit misleading, but the fact that within the income and expenditure sides we have had to mix figures from different years (fundraising from an earlier year than the other income figures, rent a year later than the other expenses) means that the composite figures are indeed estimated. But since the figures are collected on the same basis for each playgroup, I do not think it wildly wrong to use them as a basis for comparison between playgroups. It may well be bad accounting, but it is not necessarily inaccurate for comparative patterns.

The figures for rent and wages were taken from questions 17 and 20 respectively: while the items in question 18 are aggregated for the amount spent on children. This was done for two reasons: firstly, because a number of groups could only report a composite amount, and secondly because the comparison between wages and the sums spent directly on children make an interesting comparison. We shall look at these figures in particular detail, and report the statistics in much more comprehensive form than the other figures. To do this for everything would be boring in the extreme, and a look at two of our figures in detail will show that the exercise isn't only boring but meaningless also.

RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

We begin with a look at response rates. There were questionnaires circulated to 1316 playgroups in Scotland, and 476 were returned in varying degrees of completion: this is a response rate of 36%. The only percentages on response rates obtainable were on a regional basis. These figures are presented in table five. Clearly, we knew in advance the percentage of groups in each region, but there was no way of knowing in advance the figures for, say, groups of a certain management structure. This makes estimates of bias in the response rate difficult.

The only independent guide to this I ever had was at an SPPA training day run by the SEC Public Relations Sub-committee. I was a sort of coopted member of this, as the facts and figures person, and I handed round my membership lists on which I had ticked all playgroups sending back their questionnaires. The people at the day were from district and regional committees, and knew their areas pretty well. Typically, they whizzed through the list, saying things like 'well, I'm not surprised they didn't respond' and 'I know her, she never answers anything'. Occasionally, there was a snort of 'I'll go and give them a good talking to!'. Quite clearly, people who knew their own areas had an instinctive or intuitive expectation of which groups would send the questionnaire back. I never was able to isolate this 'feel' for a group, but it seems that the groups that were expected to respond were the ones where the participants in the day had a positive personal contact: someone they knew and considered a reliable playgroup person. Since the majority of groups, respondents and non respondents, were not found surprising by the women at the training day, I was tempted to conclude that if there is a bias, it is the playgroups who don't know other playgroups who didn't respond: the ones isolated from SPPA structures. I have no objective evidence supporting this: and since a sample of 476 groups is a pretty big one anyway, I don't think it invalidates the figures. But the homogeneity we observed earlier may well be a result of biased response. It could be said that playgroups interested in answering a questionnaire have other things in common to, over and above a greater likelihood that someone in the regional committee knows of them. What that something might be, there is no way of telling. The only information I have on playgroups who didn't respond is what region they were in.

This information is presented in Table 5, together with the percentages of those who did send the questionnaires back for certain key questions. As is usual in postal surveys, not all questions were answered, and not all answers were usable. Table

five shows that as far as can be ascertained, this internal non-response rate is insignificant. The figures for regional responses also show that there is no discernable regional pattern to non-respondents. I can see no reason for not taking the figures collected as presenting a true and accurate picture of SPPA and how it functions (as an auditor would put it).

THE MAIN PICTURE

Let us hit the high spots from the questionnaire (including some figures not in the tables given), and present an overall picture of Scottish playgroups. The average playgroup (statistically speaking) has 36 children on its register, which means that over 45,000 Scottish children attend playgroups. However, the group can provide places for only 23 of them: in other words, each child can attend only some sessions. This gap between children and places is widest in small towns, where an average 45 children have to share 22 places between them. In Glasgow there was a balance between places and children. 58% of groups had a waiting list, with an average of 26 children on the list - that probably means over 20,000 children were waiting to go to playgroups. At least one-third of these were over three years old, so certainly would have gone had there been places available. Some of the others were no doubt put down by their parents in advance.

Playgroups meet for sessions, each of which lasts for about two and a half hours, and is usually a morning event. A quarter of groups also meet in the afternoon, but for shorter sessions of about two hours. The average number of sessions per week is four, with 62% of all children attending twice each week. Only 10% go once a week. This means that there are well over five thousand sessions in Scotland each week- about 13,500 hours, which works out at nearly half a million sessions per year, and over a million playgroup hours. We estimated over twenty-seven million child-hours each year in the whole country.

table 1: b r e a k d o w n s o f p l a y g r o u p e x p e n d i t u r e

	total of estimated average expenditure	breakdowns of expenditure: average annual rent (inc 138 groups with none)	average annual wagebill 77-78	average spent on children 77-78	average spent on children per child 77-78	average spent on wages per child 77-78
units	£	£	£	£	£..p	£..p
whole of scotland						
total estimated	1164178	168211	925440	280273		
average	882	127	541	212	6.92	15.45
urban: all	948	138	626	206	6.54	18.41
"middle class"	1118	161	847	189	6.60	33.37
"working class"	710	82	456	178	6.60	15.69
rural: all	837	117	472	217	7.22	13.00
small town	1008	134	629	265	6.59	13.86
village	827	129	420	215	7.11	12.68
isolated	431	51	228	136	8.68	11.91
regions						
borders	635	55	545	234	6.89	10.93
central	879	154	455	203	6.47	12.16
dumfries	759	107	533	145	4.31	11.81
fife	1067	198	616	234	7.48	17.45
grampian	821	79	454	199	6.77	12.63
highlands	703	129	362	225	8.89	11.00
lothians	1002	170	746	240	8.24	28.55
strathclyde	875	120	526	215	6.47	13.47
tayside	829	129	484	177	6.79	14.73
islands	679	12	520	137	8.30	16.47
strathclyde divs:						
argyll	397	89	237	143	8.83	9.17
ayr	870	83	608	224	5.68	12.59
dumbarton	929	113	580	224	6.33	14.72
glasgow	621	106	327	190	8.71	13.44
lanark	1070	118	635	259	5.82	12.39
renfrew	906	205	508	177	5.75	15.46
parental help						
all help	720	128	418	184	7.24	13.43
not all help	983	137	616	228	6.72	16.66
management						
current parents	859	132	502	205	6.92	14.15
all other types	919	120	605	234	6.99	17.54
training						
one or less	833	119	508	188	6.86	17.18
more than one	923	135	569	230	6.97	13.97
no grant	915	115	658	198	6.58	20.05
some grant	871	132	507	216	7.05	14.16

table 2: b r e a k d o w n s o f p l a y g r o u p i n c o m e

	estimated average income per playgroup	average grant (including 113 playgroups with no grant) 78-79	average income from session fees 78-79	average income from parental fundraising 77-78	average amount of session fee in pence 78-79	average amount fundraised per child 77-78	estimate of average income (all sources) per child per year
units	£	£	£	£	pence	£	£
whole of scotland							
total estimated	1363297	113915	948869	267148			
average	1035	88	721	203	25	7	30
urban: all	1101	119	794	192	24	6	31
"middle CLASS"	1192	33	900	200	29	6	32
"working class"	926	225	451	162	18	6	34
rural: all	979	62	659	208	25	7	30
small town	1189	64	854	228	25	6	27
village	1000	60	654	213	26	7	31
isolated	508	40	319	154	24	10	34
regions							
borders	835	21	546	190	23	6	22
central	990	27	799	178	28	6	30
dumfries	888	14	723	148	27	7	26
fife	1255	53	979	231	31	7	36
grampian	1070	35	794	180	26	6	30
highlands	833	<1	559	187	24	8	27
lothians	1223	533	455	189	12	6	39
strathclyde	1048	31	761	223	26	7	28
tayside	850	32	645	182	28	7	31
islands	454	25	727	120	23	8	30
strathclyde divs:							
argyll	782	18	498	193	22	10	46
ayr	1138	26	875	186	25	5	24
dumbarton	1247	39	867	295	26	8	28
glasgow	737	21	558	176	23	9	32
lanark	1122	46	801	265	24	7	23
renfrew	941	25	758	176	32	6	31
parental help							
all help	940	50	653	188	26	8	32
not all help	1099	112	765	212	25	6	29
management							
current parents	995	80	694	193	26	7	31
all other types	1096	96	681	219	24	7	30
training							
one or less	929	78	631	186	25	7	31
more than one	1112	95	797	215	25	7	30
no grant	1032	0	804	203	27	7	27
some grant	1035	123	687	201	25	7	31

table 3: a n a l y s e s o f s i z e a n d s t a f f

	average number of children on playgroup register 78-79	difference in size from 77-78	average number of places for children each play session	ratio of staff per 100 children (excluding rota parents)	percentage of untrained staff (excluding rota parents)
units	children	+ or -	children		%
whole of scotland					
total estimated	46875	203	29951		
average	36	1	23	10	19
urban: all	38	1	24	9	17
"middle CLASS"	35	-2	25	12	16
"working class"	32	2	23	10	21
rural: all	33	1	22	10	21
small town	45	1	23	7	21
village	32	.5	22	9	16
isolated	15	0	18	17	37
regions					
borders	38	4.5	20	13	30
central	33	0	21	9	14
dumfries	34	-1	21	10	17
fife	36	-1	23	9	9
grampian	34	2	21	8	21
highlands	28	.5	21	12	45
lothians	36	2	24	9	16
strathclyde	38	0	24	9	15
tayside	30	2	22	9	26
islands	28	0	21	12	79
strathclyde divs:					
argyll	22	2.5	18	18	9
ayr	44	2	26	7	27
dumbarton	43	-5	20	9	12
glasgow	24	1	23	11	23
lanark	48	3	25	7	11
renfrew	33	0	25	11	6
parental help					
all help	30		22	10	19
not all help	39		23	9	19
management					
current parents	34		22	9	16
all other types	38		23	10	22
training					
one or less	31		23	10	27
more than one	40		23	9	13
no grant	36		24	9	27
some grant	35		22	9	16

table 4:

	parental involvement				percentage of groups with no grant	percentage of all groups answering
	percentage of groups in which all parents help regularly	average number of times each parent helps per year	percentage of playgroups with committee only of current parents	percentage of groups with some help from fathers		
units	%		%	%	%	
whole of scotland						
total estimated	39				28	100
average		14	62	72		
urban: all	45	14	54	70	27	44
"middle CLASS"	46	12	54		23	8
"working class"	28	16	50		14	7
rural: all	53	13	67	73	30	56
small town	26	11	57		34	18
village	41	14	75		24	26
isolated	56	14	67		35	10
regions						
borders	53	11	62	71	13	4
central	43	15	70	76	43	5
dumfries	23	9	67	95	60	4
fife	23	11	55	79	3	8
grampian	53	12	70	63	32	10
highlands	48	16	56	72	86	6
lothians	14	16	51	64	13	11
strathclyde	44	15	63	71	14	41
tayside	33	11	72	73	48	9
islands	57	14	25	75	25	2
strathclyde divs:						
argyll	36	15	54	72	18	2
ayr	48	14	77	77	18	8
dumbarton	47	14	63	85	0	8
glasgow	50	21	44	51	11	7
lanark	15	16	55	73	17	9
renfrew	67	12	77	64	23	7
parental help						
all help		14	77	73		38
not all help		14	56	74		62
management						
current parents	43	14		74		60
all other types	26	14		73		40
training						
one or less		13		73		46
more than one		14		83		54
no grant		13		78		28
some grant		14		73		72

Table 5: This gives the response rate for Scotland as a whole, and for various key questions, gives the number responding to that question, with the percentage of those who sent the questionnnaire back. It can be seen that there isn't any clear pattern of non-response to any one question. The final figure is the number who responded to all the questions relating to children, fees, sessions and accounts. The differences are not remarkable, with the exception of Borders (20% fewer than anywhere else) which is hardly significant given the small number involved, and Fife (20% more than anywhere else). It can be seen that 100% response rates to questions for Fife playgroups were not uncommon, and since there is a buildup of non-respondents over each question for the last category, this again is unsurprising.

RESPONSE RATES

	TOT	RET	%	Q7	%	Q8	%	Q14	%	Q22	%	Q23	%	Q24	%	Q11	%	Q19	%	Q20	%	Q27	%	ALL FIGU	%
BORDERS	47	17	36	17	100	16	94	15	88	16	94	16	94	15	88	16	94	13	76	11	65	13	76	4	24
DUMFRIES	54	21	39	21	100	20	95	20	95	21	100	21	100	21	100	19	90	20	95	17	81	19	90	12	57
CENTRAL	86	25	29	24	96	23	92	21	84	23	92	23	92	23	92	22	88	22	88	22	88	18	72	14	56
FIFE	94	38	40	38	100	38	100	36	95	38	100	38	100	38	100	37	97	36	95	38	100	35	92	29	76
GRAMPIAN	130	46	35	44	96	43	93	40	87	44	96	44	96	43	93	37	80	35	76	36	78	37	80	22	48
HIGHLANDS	93	29	31	29	100	28	97	28	97	27	93	28	97	27	93	25	86	23	79	20	69	22	76	12	41
LOTHIAN	151	54	36	53	98	52	96	52	96	51	94	51	94	50	93	49	91	44	81	49	91	43	80	34	63
STRATHCLYDE	540	196	36	191	97	192	98	189	96	193	98	193	98	193	98	185	94	173	88	170	87	169	86	120	61
TAYSIDE & ISLANDS	121	51	42	49	96	48	94	47	92	47	92	47	92	46	90	39	76	41	80	33	65	38	75	22	43
TOTAL	1316	477	36	466	98	460	96	448	94	460	96	461	97	456	96	429	90	407	85	396	83	394	83	269	56
URBAN		215		215	100	206	96	202	94	205	95	206	96	206	96	195	382	186	87	181	84	169	79	127	59
RURAL		251		251	100	246	98	239	95	241	96	245	98	242	96	226	443	216	86	209	83	221	88	138	55

(The object of presenting these figures is, indeed, to impress: the scope and size of the co-ordinated voluntary effort is pretty staggering, and would be a major achievement for any conventional organization to hold together, let alone a voluntary one with unpaid part-time short-term management. Yet is has worked for years. It is surely about time we thought about how it does so. Which is what this thesis is all about.)

Over 65% of Scottish groups have the same constitution - the model one produced by SPPA, and all are autonomous entities in their own right. Over three-quarters have charitable status.

Apart from the parental help - which we shall come to later - the ratio of staff to children is one to ten. Playgroup staff are called, variously, supervisors or playleaders, and are employed by the playgroup, and paid a wage, which is pretty pitiful - in 1976 it was less than £250 per year, which is lousy even for part-time work. Over 80% of the playleaders are trained for the work, usually by SPPA regional or district courses - the average playleader has been on three of these. Their job is to provide skill, continuity and permanence for the parents and children involved. Each group has two or three such people, the most senior being with the group some three and a half years.

Parents are involved in two ways: in the managing of the group, and in helping at sessions. 94% of playgroups have parents on the committee, and 93% have a regular rota for parental help. Only 3% have no parental help at all (presumably they are hospital, church or other type of wholly-sponsored group). 39% of groups have regular involvement from every single parent - in an additional 48%, most parents help regularly. In over half the groups, there are no parents who never help. On average, parental help at sessions would involve fourteen sessions per year. SPPA estimate over one million hours worked by parents in 1977-78. Question 25 on the survey asked about the proportion of parents who never help. Out of 336 who answered the question, 174 said no parents never helped, and 162 reported some parents who never

helped. The former group were on average 25% smaller (11 children fewer), received on average £47 less grant, and spent £183 less on wages but £4 more on children per year. They do have a smaller ratio of staff to children. These figures were significant, but causation is as usual difficult to infer. In any event, we have said that our aim is primarily to present a picture of how playgroups run rather than use the figures as inferential evidence, and the overall picture of near-universal mutual-aid in Scottish playgroups is an impressive fact in its own right, irrespective of any conclusions.

When we look at playgroup finances, we should remember that though the total of income for individual groups was estimated at some £1.3 million, unpaid work by parents would have been worth at least that had it been paid. Of that £1.3 million, the lion's share, around £950,000 came from session fees and a further £250,000 was fundraised by parents. Only £113,000 was given in support by government - and whatever theoretical views one may on the benefits of grant-aid or otherwise, this low amount was not for lack of playgroups asking. And whatever views we come to about government help for mutual-aid groups being double-edged, I didn't hear in nearly three years of knowing playgroup people of one instance of grant being refused to a group for 'their own good' - in other words, the lack of government grants to playgroups in Scotland was not a deliberate policy designed to strengthen the playgroup movement.

The three main areas of expenditure were wages, rent and children - this latter covers milk, equipment and so on. Some £925,000 was spent on wages, with £250,000 on children and the rest on rent. The small wages paid to playleaders were not a result of meanness, but of poverty. Put another way - the average playgroup session cost 39p per child in 1978-79. 25p of this was the session fee and only 3.25p is from a subsidy: the gap has to be fundraised. The 39p is spent with 26p on wages, 8p on children and 5p on rent. Bear in mind also that though there is an average grant of £88, 28% of groups got nothing, and a further 48% got

less than £50. Only 9% got over £100. And as we observed in the last chapter, 70% of all the grant came in Lothian - if the Lothians are excluded, the average goes down to £30.

Oddly enough, a playgroup with a grant spends £4 more per year on children, and £150 per year less on wages. That they have fewer untrained staff is expected.

On training, in the two years previous to the survey, around 5000 mothers went on training courses - that's between two and three per group. 70% of these were also on the committee (which bears out the remarks earlier about the pattern of recruitment and commitment). Interestingly, the usually negative correlation (-.3) between size and amount spent on children is absent when training is also considered. Playgroups with at least two trained mothers were larger (expected) by 39 to 31, but they spent around £50 more on children per year. They also had more parental help at sessions - an average of two extra sessions help per parent.

Bearing in mind that this survey has been entirely concerned with the individual groups rather than the SPPA organization, we can mention that 30% of groups reported someone as going to the SPPA A.G.M. in the past two years - this is a pretty high proportion for mothers with children at a weekend conference in a country like Scotland. On any reckoning, the support between individual playgroups and the local, regional and national groups must be mutual.

The figures of most interest to playgroups themselves were the regional differences. In this they probably show more sense than those of us who look for less tangible and intuitively meaningful statistics. Most of the regional figures are in tables 1 to 4, but some extremes that didn't get into the charts follow. Many playgroups have mother and toddler groups for under threes attached - the average for the country was 14%, but in Highlands it was double this at 28%. Overall, the number of children in playgroups is on the increase slightly: but over 80% of groups in the Borders were larger whereas a similar proportion in the Argyll division of Strathclyde were smaller. We asked whether

groups gave reduced fees for siblings at the same playgroup - 37% overall did so nationally, and 85% of groups in the Highlands did so, but only 18% in Lothian. Over half the groups in Highland reported larger grants, whilst over half the groups in Fife and Lothians reported smaller grants ..... but then Highland had the smallest grants and Lothians and Fife the largest, so this would be equitable were it a redistribution. The practice of paying a larger fee to get out of doing rota duty was only present in 11% of groups - only in Highlands was it absent, whilst 33% of groups in Central Region thought it a good idea to implement. The figure of three and a half years for the time the senior playleader had been with the group went up to over four years in Lothians, where the best wages were paid.

More miscellanea ..... Highland Region playleaders were the best trained, having been on an average of 4.25 courses each, compared with a Scottish average of 2.85. The average waiting list was 9 in Borders, 12 in Tayside, 34 in Grampian and 37 in the Islands. All other regions were between 22 and 28 children on the list. Nationally, one-third of these children were over three, but this rose to 71% in the Borders and fell to 16% in Central.

We also collected figures on rent and premises. The average rent was £127 per year, but 30% of groups have free premises. 25% have free heating. The most common type of place to meet was a church hall - over 30% of all groups met there, but they paid an average £159 and only 17% got in free. So much for the Church. 32% met in various types of local authority premises , with well over half paying no rent or heating. 63% of groups with free premises also received grants, but the grant was around £45 less than the average for all groups. Schoolchildren helping at sessions was a widespread practice - about a third of all groups involved schools. 15%, at the other end, had help from old age pensioners.

We could go on and on, but the overall picture of Scottish playgroups is a pretty clear one by now - despite the variety in the details, the homogeneity is remarkable. All groups are constructed on the same model, replicated throughout Scotland. This model perpetuates itself year after year, with continually changing membership and only temporary, part-time, and either unpaid or badly paid help. Each playgroup is autonomous and responsible for its own affairs, run, controlled and staffed and funded almost entirely by the parents of the children involved. These individual groups band together in branches, in districts, in regions and nationally for mutual support, help, training and pooling of knowledge and experience. The evidence here is conclusive.

RECAPITULATION

We are now at the end of this treatise. But before we close, we'll review the position we have reached and the major steps we have taken on the way.

We began with a discussion of the concept of organizational form. This, it will be remembered, refers to the way that people in an organization are organized. We distinguished hierarchical forms of organization in which the main concerns are with control, authority and discipline, from voluntary forms of organization, in which the main concerns are with agreement and co-operation. We said that we would refer to the latter as mutual-aid groups. It will also be remembered that we said at that time that any organization could be analysed in either way, and the way we chose to analyse it depended on whether we were interested in one or the other set of attributes. If we are interested in co-operative action and voluntary agreements in any organization we could look on it as a mutual-aid group, while it may be equally fruitful to look at authority and discipline in

even the most voluntary group. The approach is rather like that of quantum theory in physics, in which light is looked on sometimes as if it were a wave, sometimes as if it were a particle, depending entirely on the interest of the researcher and the explanatory value of the framework.

We started from the premise that in fact there are some groups which would by most criteria be regarded as voluntary organizations in the mutual-aid group sense, and observed that the commonly accepted paradigm of an organization is in fact a hierarchical one, which doesn't really aid our understanding of how they work. To find a model of organization which was more appropriate, we turned to anarchist writings on organization. With their emphasis on mutualism and federalism, anarchist organizational models were much more useful than orthodox ones. We furthered our understanding of this anarchist model with a short history of anarchist organization in Spain, as being one of the few large-scale models we could draw on.

The perspective then shifted to sociology and to the way the two concepts of community and organization developed (from the work of Tonnies and Weber respectively) as disjunctives. Organization is seen as rational and explainable, whilst community is seen as irrational and inherently inexplicable, and this hardly aided the development of a theory of mutual-aid groups. We then developed such a theory by starting with the aim of seeing a pattern in the way people in groups interacted, and put that pattern together in a sort of reverse order by analysing the concepts it had to embrace. We saw the ambiguities in our concepts of authority and rules, and by observing the results of assuming that people acted economically rationally, drew the conclusion that people in mutual-aid groups did not behave like that. Furthermore, we developed the principle that people in mutual-aid groups suspend their rational self-interest, and called this a group ethic. Our two other principles emerged as feelings of belonging and co-operative action, and we observed that it was in the interaction between this three areas of

belief, feeling and action that the pattern of activity in a mutual-aid group was to be found.By integrating this with the critical theory of Habermas, and some writings from the women's movement, we came to see both the necessity for democracy and equality and also the pitfalls in getting there. Our final theoretical step was to knock down a common paradigm of mutual aid and voluntary organization, based on Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy, and Weber's theory of the routinization of charisma. We then continued our development of the theory of mutual-aid groups with a review of the different types of groups that existed - temporary and permanent groups, with temporary or permanent members, which were either open or closed - and illustrated the usefulness of the way we had developed for looking at the way they worked by examining a few cases from the literature. We continued our empirical explorations with a look at the way mutual aid groups function in and with the welfare state.

We then turned to a lengthy study the Scottish Pre-School Playgroups Association as an example of not just how a mutual-aid group worked in practise, but also of how it did so successfully. The account was descriptive rather than analytical, concentrating on the way SPPA worked and some of the problems it faced, including the case of Lothian Region. We looked lastly at the survey of playgroups in 1977-78. This study of SPPA served to illustrate that we have not been theorizing in a vacuum, that the anarchist organizational model isn't something existing only in history books, and that our subject matter and our ideas have a great deal of substance to them. Once again, this is like the quantum theory - it was developed long before any theoretical proof was found that confirmed the existence of the constructs that it postulated.

When we compare the structure of SPPA with the suggestions of the Spanish Anarchists about organization which we quoted and discussed at some length early on, the parallels we can draw are

remarkable, and not to be laid down at the door of coincidence. No conventional theory of organization can even adequately begin to encompass the playgroup movement in its analysis, but anarchist theory can do so. Now I'm not suggesting that there exists a fifth column of anarchist mums, waiting in their tens of thousands in the wings for the collapse of the authoritarian state to self-organize society, meanwhile practising on their little kids. (Though the fantasy is one I find cheering). What both playgroups and the Spanish Anarchist have discovered independently (and the Spanish were probably not the first - Kropotkin and co. go on at great length about free cities and medieval autonomous groups, and in the seventeenth century in England many of these ideas found a pretty full expression in the activities of the many radical groups which flourished when the English State broke down temporarily) is a method of coordinating independent groups into a large force without losing the vitality and commitment that comes from individuals who work in small groups they can control and run themselves.

The articulation of the ideas of federation and mutual aid from both the anarchist and playgroup movement is remarkably similar. The ideas worked in Spain for sixty years and have worked in Scotland, in different circumstances, for 15 years so far - but there can be no doubt from looking at the published comments in the participants in both that the principles of federation are the same. The conclusion that there is something that works, and works powerfully and well, is not a difficult one to draw. And given the right grass-roots mutual-aid groups to build on, it should work anywhere.

In a sense, we have come full circle, for one of the things we originally wanted to show was that the anarchist alternative is in fact a viable one. We have seen this to be the case in both theory and practice. But to say "I told you so" is not the best way of ending, however true it may be. For voluntary organization and mutual aid are not a luxury or a dream in the age we live in, but a matter of survival. As Chomsky said of anarchism, "it is

the problem of survival, not revolution, that has obsessed us". The significance, if there is any, of everything that we have argued and demonstrated here, is that a better understanding of the way that we can organize together voluntarily might help us to do so. And if we succeed in that, the human race race will be a little closer to regaining control over its own destiny.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

TEXT OF THE 1978 PLAYGROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

This is the questionnaire as it was sent out to all playgroups, minus the preambe at the beginning. This explained what the information was needed for, how to fill the boxes in, and included an exhortation to send the thing back. As can be seen from the chart, 36% responded out of over 1300.
This text doesn't reproduce the physical layout of the questionnaire, or show what the boxes looked like: it is intended purely as a reference for interpretation of the results.
Glossary: 'CONTACT' is the name of the playgroup magazine, sent out free to all members every month.

MEMBERSHIP

1)What is the name of your group?
Please give the name of your group's
a) Branch (if any)
b) District/Division
c) Region

FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOXES

2)Which of the following does your membership cover?
a) Playgroup 3-5 years
b) Mother and Toddler group only

c) Playgroup and Mother and toddler group

d) 0-5 years group

e) Other (specify)

3)What type of SPPA membership do you have ?

a) Full membership

b) Sponsored full membership

c) Associate membership

4) Does any member of your group also have an SPPA individual membership? (No)

If so, which of the following?

a) Playleader

b) Committee member

c) Parent

5) If a mother and toddler group and a playgroup,

a) Do you share the same equipment? (yes/no)

b) Do you share the same room? (yes/no)

6) Please indicate what kind of constitution your group has by ticking one of the following:

a) Playgroup constitution agreed on at the 1976 Inverness AGM

b) Other constitution

c) No constitution at all

7) If your group has charitable status, please give the year in which you registered with the Inland revenue (19..)

If you don't know, tick here.

From which area do most of the children come? (tick one only)

URBAN
Executive/professional
Mixed professional/skilled
Skilled and/or manual
Mixed professional/skilled/manual

RURAL
Small Town
Village
Isolated (small village, scattered houses)

8) If you admit 2 1/2 to 3 year old children to your playgroup, how many are on the group's register at the moment?

If you are a mother and toddler group only, you can stop now: but if you are a playgroup, carry on, but answer the questions ONLY FOR THE 3-5 YEAR OLD CHILDREN IN THE PLAYGROUP.

GROWTH, SIZE AND FINANCE

8) What is the total number of children actually on your group's register at the moment?
Please insert the figures in the boxes.

Is this number larger or smaller than last year? (please tick) (larger,smaller)

By how much? (numbers in boxes)

9) How many morning sessions are there each week?
How long does each morning session last? (hrs, mins)
How many afternoon sessions are there each week?
How long does each afternoon session last? (hrs, mins)
What is the total number of places offered for children each play session? (numbers in boxes)

10) How many children on the register attend playgroup
(number in boxes)

Once a week
Twice a week
Three times a week
Four times a week
Five times a week
More often than five

11) What is the fee charged for each play session? (in pence)

If more than one child in the same family attends playgroup, is there a reduced fee for the younger brother or sister?
(Yes/no)

12) If the group has a waiting list, please give the number of children on it.
How many of these are over three years old?

13) a)What kind of premises do you use? (please tick one box only)

Private House
Church Hall
Village Hall
Tenants Association Hall
Leisure/Community Centre
Primary/Secondary School
Playbus
Other (please specify) .....

b)If you pay rent (including heating charges, donation etc.) what is the current rent/donation per year (to nearest pound)

14) Please tick one of the following to show what kind of a grant you receive:

No grant
Grant from Social Work Department

Grant from Education Department
Grant from Church
Other (specify) .....

What was the amount received this year to the nearest ound?

15) If you received a grant last year (1976-77) was it
a) Larger
b) Smaller
c) about the same
Tick here if you received no grant last year

16) Do you intend to apply for a grant next year? (1978-79) (Yes/no)

17) If you get other help, please tick as appropriate
Free premises
Free heating
Free equipment
Playleaders' wages paid

18) How much did you spend on equipment last year (1976-77) e.g. sandtrays
How much did you spend on last year on expendable materials, e.g. glue, paint, sand etc.
How much did yopu spend last year on sundries (excluding milk)? (please give answers to the nearest pound)

19) To the nearest pound, how much did you manage to fundraise last year 1976-77?

20) How many playgroup staff did you have last year? (full time and part time)

What was the total wage bill last year (1976-77) to nearest pound?

21) With whom is your playgroup insured?

(Tick one only)

a) Nobody

b) SPPA/Sun Alliance

c) Morton Michel

d) Other .....

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

22) How is your group managed? (please tick one box)

a) Solely by elected current parents' committee

b) Solely by elected committee of current and past parents

c) by parents' representatives and representatives of other organization (e.g. Church elder)

d) one person, or partnership

e) by an institution

f) other (specify) .....

23) How do you organize parents helping during sessions? (tick one box only)

a) Regular rota

b) Occasional help

c) Other (specify)

Tick here if parents aren't expected to help at all

Are parents allowed to opt out of rota duty by paying an extra fee? (yes/no)

24) What proportion of parents help regularly

(on the rota)

all

most

about half

only a few

none

25) What proportion of parents help occasionally

all
most
about half
only a few
none

26) What proportion of parents never help?

all
most
about half
only a few
none

27) How many times, on average, did each parent help last term? (Aug-Dec 1977)

28) Do you also have fathers

on rota duty
on committee
helping fund-raising
mending equipment
other .....

29) Tick for whichever of the following participated in play sessions this year:

secondary school pupils
youth/community students
trainee teachers
Others including OAPs (specify) .....

CONTACT

30) Do you recieve contact?

31) How many people usually read the groups' copy?

32) Is it displayed at the playgroup?

33) Please indicate which of the following read contact

playleaders
committee members
parents

35) Do you distribute old Contacts to any of the following:

Dentists Waiting Rooms
Doctors Waiting Rooms
Ante/Post natal clinics
Citizens Advice Bureaux
Local District Councillors
Churches
Health Visitors
Gingerbread groups
your M.P.
Regional Councillors

Total ticked =

36) Do you keep old Contacts for reference? (yes/no)

TRAINING

37) How many committee members have taken a playgroup training course since 1976?

38) How many parents (other than committee) have taken any playgroup training c

How long has your most senior playleader been working with the group (to nearest year)?

39) For each present playleader, state number of playgroup training courses attended, either as student or teacher, over the past five years.

Playleader A

Playleader B

Playleader C

Playleader D

Playleader E

40) How many staff in your group have recieved NO playgroup training at all ?

41) Please tick to show if any member or playleader has attended any of the following since 1976 (Member)(Leader)

Playgroup Training Day

Day conference

Mother/helper course in playgroup

Mother/helper playgroup workshop held locally

SPPA A.G.M. or conference

42) Please show who has filled in this questionnaire by ticking one of the boxes:

Playleader

Committee

Both jointly

Other single committee member

Other .....

Thankyou for your help.

NOTE: There was no question 34 on the original due to a typing

error, and this has been preserved here.

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(The object of presenting these figures is, indeed, to impress: the scope and size of the co-ordinated voluntary effort is pretty staggering, and would be a major achievement for any conventional organization to hold together, let alone a voluntary one with unpaid part-time short-term management. Yet is has worked for years. It is surely about time we thought about how it does so. Which is what this thesis is all about.)

Over 65% of Scottish groups have the same constitution - the model one produced by SPPA, and all are autonomous entities in their own right. Over three-quarters have charitable status.

Apart from the parental help - which we shall come to later - the ratio of staff to children is one to ten. Playgroup staff are called, variously, supervisors or playleaders, and are employed by the playgroup, and paid a wage, which is pretty pitiful - in 1976 it was less than £250 per year, which is lousy even for part-time work. Over 80% of the playleaders are trained for the work, usually by SPPA regional or district courses - the average playleader has been on three of these. Their job is to provide skill, continuity and permanence for the parents and children involved. Each group has two or three such people, the most senior being with the group some three and a half years.

Parents are involved in two ways: in the managing of the group, and in helping at sessions. 94% of playgroups have parents on the committee, and 93% have a regular rota for parental help. Only 3% have no parental help at all (presumably they are hospital, church or other type of wholly-sponsored group). 39% of groups have regular involvement from every single parent - in an additional 48%, most parents help regularly. In over half the groups, there are no parents who never help. On average, parental help at sessions would involve fourteen sessions per year. SPPA estimate over one million hours worked by parents in 1977-78. Question 25 on the survey asked about the proportion of parents who never help. Out of 336 who answered the question, 174 said no parents never helped, and 162 reported some parents who never

helped. The former group were on average 25% smaller (11 children fewer), received on average £47 less grant, and spent £183 less on wages but £4 more on children per year. They do have a smaller ratio of staff to children. These figures were significant, but causation is as usual difficult to infer. In any event, we have said that our aim is primarily to present a picture of how playgroups run rather than use the figures as inferential evidence, and the overall picture of near-universal mutual-aid in Scottish playgroups is an impressive fact in its own right, irrespective of any conclusions.

When we look at playgroup finances, we should remember that though the total of income for individual groups was estimated at some £1.3 million, unpaid work by parents would have been worth at least that had it been paid. Of that £1.3 million, the lion's share, around £950,000 came from session fees and a further £250,000 was fundraised by parents. Only £113,000 was given in support by government - and whatever theoretical views one may on the benefits of grant-aid or otherwise, this low amount was not for lack of playgroups asking. And whatever views we come to about government help for mutual-aid groups being double-edged, I didn't hear in nearly three years of knowing playgroup people of one instance of grant being refused to a group for 'their own good' - in other words, the lack of government grants to playgroups in Scotland was not a deliberate policy designed to strengthen the playgroup movement.

The three main areas of expenditure were wages, rent and children - this latter covers milk, equipment and so on. Some £925,000 was spent on wages, with £250,000 on children and the rest on rent. The small wages paid to playleaders were not a result of meanness, but of poverty. Put another way - the average playgroup session cost 39p per child in 1978-79. 25p of this was the session fee and only 3.25p is from a subsidy: the gap has to be fundraised. The 39p is spent with 26p on wages, 8p on children and 5p on rent. Bear in mind also that though there is an average grant of £88, 28% of groups got nothing, and a further 48% got